EPIC WONDER IN PARADISE LOST

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the evocation of wonder in the reader of Paradise Lost. The first chapter relates Paradise Lost to earlier epic in an attempt to explore the characteristic features of the marvellous in epic poetry of all ages, whilst the second and third chapters concentrate upon the wonderful in Paradise Lost itself.

The first chapter is divided into three sections. In the first I shall look at marvels of achievement and action, in the second, I shall look at events, situations and proclamations which only have the appearance of being marvellous, whilst in the third section I shall examine the way in which each epic poet's understanding of the marvellous is influenced by his world-view. I shall argue that Paradise Lost differs from earlier epic, in that Milton has a thesis to assert (the thesis of Eternal Providence) which the action of his poem (the disobedience and Fall of Man) would seem to deny. I shall argue that it is from the friction between the thesis and action of Paradise Lost that the reader's wonder primarily springs.

In the second chapter, I shall examine the way in which the Creation supports the thesis of Providence in Paradise Lost. I shall look first at Eden, then at the Creation of the universe in six days.

In the third and final chapter, I shall examine the collision between the action and thesis of Paradise Lost as they are

reflected in the contrasting images or emblems of a labyrinth and a straight path. I shall look specifically at the lexical battle for the words "wander", "wonder", "maze", "amaze" and "way". I shall argue that Milton's justification of the ways of God to men consists of a revelation of the way of Providence.

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CHAPTER ONE: MILTON AND THE EPIC

Since I propose to talk at length about epic poetry, I shall begin by offering a tentative definition of the genre. This is no easy task since the only universally accepted qualifying words are "long" and "narrative". The word "epic" itself is derived from the Greek "epos" meaning "word" or "song"--a fact which reminds us that the earliest epics were unwritten and designed for oral delivery. This fact has led to the drawing of a sharp distinction between two kinds of epic; on the one hand "primary" or "authentic", and on the other, "secondary" or "literary". The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are generally agreed to belong to the "primary" or "authentic" category, whereas the *Aeneid* and *Paradise Lost* are placed with the "secondary" group because they were written as they were composed and were designed to be read. Furthermore, due to their structural resemblance (both poems consist of twelve books) Virgil's epic has often been cited as a model for Milton's. Thus past attempts to define the genre and to place Milton within it have often taken one of two forms; either the classification of the species into sub-divisions or else the attempt to draw structural parallels between different poems for the purpose of conferring generic identity through design. While these approaches have often shed light upon the various individual poems, there are

several reasons to be wary of this understanding of epic poetry in general and Paradise Lost in particular.

First of all, whilst it may be true that the Iliad and Odyssey were composed orally whereas the Aeneid and Paradise Lost were written as they were composed, this fact does not mean that the Iliad and Odyssey cannot now be read from the page, still less that the Aeneid and Paradise Lost may not be read aloud. Indeed, I would even go so far as to assert that all poetry is best heard rather than simply read with the eye, and of no English poetry is this more true than of Paradise Lost.

The significance which has often been placed upon the structural resemblance which Paradise Lost bears to the Aeneid, is, I think, overstated. When Paradise Lost was first published in 1667, it appeared as a poem of ten books. It was not until the publication of the second edition in 1674, the year of Milton's death, that the ten books became twelve, books VII and X being divided into two each. However felicitous the rearrangement may have been for the structure of the poem, therefore, and however much it may have owed to Virgil, it is certainly more accurately viewed as an afterthought than as a preconceived design fundamental to Milton's concept of what an epic poem should be. Furthermore, the Aeneid itself is unfinished. When on his deathbed in Brundisium in 19 BC, Virgil actually gave instructions that the manuscript be destroyed; an instruction

that was only prevented from being fulfilled by the command of Augustus himself. It is at least possible, therefore, that Virgil intended to add a further book or books describing the re-establishment of harmony in Latium following the death of Turnus, just as Homer had concluded the Iliad, not with Hector's death, but with the ransoming of his body and his funeral. Thus it is far from being an established fact that Milton looked upon Virgil's twelve book structure as the ideal design for an epic poem, nor is it certain that Virgil himself held any such view.

I have so far called into question the ultimate usefulness of any attempt to define epic either by classifying the genre into various subgeneric species, or by stipulating any exclusively suitable structure. Such a critical approach might very easily lead to the abandonment of any attempt to think in terms of genres and the dismissal of the word "epic" altogether. However, this is not my purpose. Certainly, Milton himself thought of the epic as a genre, and in his tractate Of Education (published anonymously in June 1644) he speaks of it as a species of poetry governed by its own laws. Milton had respect for prescriptive criticism and referred to it in his tractate on educational reform as

> that sublime art which in Aristotle's poetics, in Horace, and the Italian commentaries of Castelvetro, Tasso, Mazzoni and others teaches what are the laws

> of a true Epic poem, what of a
> Dramatic, what of a Lyric, what decorum is,
> which is the grand master peece to
> observe.[1]

When Milton speaks of the "laws" of an epic poem, however, he does not refer to stipulations as to structure. First of all, not all of the authorities he quotes are in agreement as to what the structure of an epic should be. Aristotle himself, for example, had insisted in the Poetics only upon the necessity of unity of action. With regard to time, he had simply described the practice of various poets and offered his own preference between them. In Ludovico Castelvetro's Italian translation of Aristotle, however, the doctrine of three "unities" was formulated as a rigid law. Tasso, in his Discorsi del Poema Eroico, had deferred to Aristotle in saying that the claims of unity in an epic plot are supported by the ancients and Reason, but had also said that those of multiplicity are supported by usage and the reader's actual taste. Whilst Milton refers to all of these "authorities" with respect, he gives no hint as to which, if any, of them he considers to be correct. In practice, he is closest to Tasso, for like Tasso he preferred to work loosely within the bounds of Classical decorum, but was prepared to alter and develop the Classical rules when it suited his purpose. In The Reason of Church Government, published two years before his

tractate On Education, Milton had shown his respect for Tasso by placing him alongside Homer and Virgil as one of the most renowned epic poets. I shall look briefly at this passage because it states, perhaps more succinctly than anywhere else Milton's thoughts upon the "laws" of epic poetry.

In the second book of The Reason of Church Government, Milton is debating with himself as to what genre of poetry to choose for the great poem he hopes he will one day leave "to aftertimes as they should not willingly let it die", when he states, almost parenthetically, his attitude towards strict prescription as to form and style. Whilst contemplating the various poetic genres available, he speculates

> whether the rules of Aristotle are herein
> strictly to be kept, or nature to be followed,
> which in them that know art and use judgement,
> is no transgression but an enriching of art.

In the light of this passage, it would seem that Milton's understanding of the concept of decorum is somewhat broader than we might suppose from his tractate Of Education. It would seem to describe a poet's inspired and creative development of a poetic genre rather than the slavish adherence to a prescribed structure. But if "the laws of a true Epic poem" may be interpreted or even reshaped as the poet wishes, of what use is the term "law" at all? Some readers might be tempted to write off the issue as an

example of inconsistency and the disguising of indecisive thinking in pompous language. But Milton does not understand "the laws of a true Epic poem" as being prescriptive so much as descriptive. The laws of the genre are its essential characteristics rather than unalterable ways of writing within it.

I shall argue in this thesis that Milton followed various renaissance scholars, in particular, Torquato Tasso, in seeing the essential and defining feature of epic poetry as the evocation of wonder in the reader or auditor. All of Milton's interpretations and adaptations of Homer, Virgil and Ovid, I shall argue, can be related to this central effect of epic poetry, the presence of which is the nearest thing to a defining characteristic for the genre. I shall begin, therefore, by relating Paradise Lost to other epic poems in an attempt to discover what the renaissance scholars meant by "epic wonder".

The recognition of the presence of the marvellous in epic poetry begins with criticism itself in Aristotle's Poetics. Aristotle was aware of the important role played by the marvellous ("to thaumaston") in epic poetry, but he saw it not as the defining characteristic of the genre, but rather as one of few qualities which could be found more readily in epic than in tragedy:

> The marvellous is certainly required in Tragedy. The Epic, however, affords more

> opening for the improbable, the chief factor in the marvellous, because in it the agents are not visibly before one.[2]

For Aristotle, epic was little more than an embryonic form of tragedy, a seed of the greater genre rather than a complete and whole genre in itself. Whilst Aristotle recognized "to thaumaston" in the epics of Homer, and was even ready to acknowledge that epic poetry provided ampler space for its development than did tragedy, he nevertheless applied the same expectations and criteria of value to both genres. Consequently he paved the way for generations of poets and critics who applied to Homer and Virgil the demand that epic, like tragedy should evoke pity and fear, and so concluded that tragedy is the greater art form because it achieves this end more effectively. It was only with the appearance of Tasso's Discorsi del Poema Eroico that epic poetry was given a critical declaration of independence. For Tasso, the reader or auditor of epic poetry is to be inspired not with pity and fear, as in tragedy, but with wonder. Epic, for Tasso is an

> imitazione d'azione illustre, grande e perfetto, fatta, narrando con altissimo verso, a fine di muover gli animi con la marauiglia.[3]
>
> (I say that the heroic poem is an imitation of an action noble, great, and perfect, narrated in the loftiest verse, with the purpose of moving the mind to wonder.)

The words "a fine" signify a difference between Tasso's critical principles and those of his predecessors. Epic poetry is no longer just an imitation of an action, but is defined by a characteristic effect. Psychological effect is now as important as form.

Thus Tasso is the first poet or theorist to argue for a sharp distinction between the effects of epic and tragedy, and the first writer on the subject to argue that epic poetry deserves to be read and appreciated on terms other than those by which tragedy is read and appreciated. This is not to say that Tasso saw himself as a rebel against old ideas. Indeed, he often turns to Aristotle as an authority to be quoted. But the emphasis which Tasso places on the importance of "la maraviglia" in epic poetry is certainly innovative. Although Tasso was not the first person to recognize the presence of the marvellous in epic poetry he was the first to argue for its central importance. So far I have used two words from foreign languages: one from ancient Greek ("to thaumaston") and one from Italian ("la maraviglia"). Both of these terms I have translated as "the marvellous" and have stated that this is the defining characteristic of the epic genre. But just what is "the marvellous" and how does it operate in epics of different cultures? It is important to make one very important distinction with regard to this subject, and that is between the marvellous as it is found in the epic proper

(whether "primary" or "literary") and the marvellous as it is found in the "romantic" epics of Boiardo and Ariosto. The difference between the two is this: whereas the epic poet claims always to tell the truth, the poets of "romantic" epic claim only to tell delightful fables. C.M. Bowra, in his study of epic From Virgil to Milton, describes the "romantic" epic as follows:

> These poets know well that many of their episodes are impossible, and their claim is that they are simply delightful. In their wonderworld anything may happen. Warriors ride in the air on hippogriffs and continue to fight after they have been sliced to pieces; magicians and sorceresses work their fantastic and fell designs; warriors travel quickly and easily to China or the Orkneys or the moon or Paradise. The poet's chief aim is to give delight, and he lives in a world where ordinary rules do not apply.[4]

In the epic proper, however, the marvellous does not belong to a separate world of pure imagination but relates to reality. The highest epic poetry does not offer mere escape from the world of common experience, it assumes the far greater task of changing the way we perceive reality. How particular epic poems achieve this, differs, of course, from poem to poem,

and from age to age, with the result that it is here, more than anywhere else that the distinction between "primary" and "literary" epic assumes some validity. For the remainder of this chapter I shall attempt to compare epic poems of different ages, (but in particular, those of Homer, Virgil and Milton) with regard to three basic categories of the marvellous. First of all, I shall compare and contrast the manner in which these poets treat marvels of action and achievement. Second, I shall examine what I have chosen to call the "false marvel" as it is found in epic poetry, and finally I shall look at the way in which the marvellous characterizes each poet's world-view and understanding of reality.

(1) Marvels of Achievement and Action

The place occupied by man in the Homeric universe is very different to that bestowed upon him by Virgil and Milton. In Homer's epics, heroic action and achievement coincide with physical prowess and valour. The life of Man is conceived as a short span of light in a sea of surrounding darkness, and while his life lasts, man's duty is towards himself. There is a story told in Herodotus of how King Midas inquired of Silenus what is the greatest joy available to Man.[5] In the story, Silenus replies that the greatest bliss a man can know is never to be born, or having been born to die soon. In his Oedipus at Colonus Antigone Sophocles, perhaps as a tribute to Herodotus,

placed these words into the mouth of Teiresias.[6] In Homer, however, the very opposite value is upheld. For the Homeric hero, the only thing worse than an early death is never to be born at all. In the Odyssey, when Odysseus encounters Achilles in the Underworld, the latter tells him that he would sooner be the servant of a peasant and yet live upon the earth, than be Achilles among the dead.[7] Thus Homer's epics, for all the misery which they portray, constitute, perhaps more than any other poems ever written, a celebration of human life. In his world the greatest good is the attainment of personal glory, a glory as yet unsubordinated to the claims of Empire or God. There is no sense in Homer, as there is in both Virgil and Milton, of a vast stretch of time, measured against which, personal glory is meaningless. Whilst Homer recognizes the darkness which surrounds human life, that darkness serves not to invalidate individual human endeavour, but rather to make its immediate fulfilment more urgent. There is, in Homer, no universal pattern of destiny or Providence in which individual life can find meaning, but such meaning as there is, must be seized in the moment. Marvels, in this world scheme, are whatever aid the hero in seizing this meaning. They may take the form of military aid (or hindrance) from the Gods, or they may spring from the hero's own native vigour.

Outstanding among the former kind, is the divine aid which Athene gives Diomede in book V of the Iliad.

Homer opens this episode with one of his most beautiful and sublime similes:

> But now to Tydeus' son Diomedes Pallas
> Athene gave might and courage, for him
> to be pre-eminent amid all the Argives
> and win glorious renown. She kindled
> flame unwearied from his helmet and
> shield, like to the star of summer that
> above all others glittereth bright after
> he hath bathed in the ocean stream. In
> such wise kindled she flame from his head
> and shoulders and sent him into the midst,
> where men thronged the thickest.
>
> (Iliad V, 1-8)

Whether they appear as friends or foes, the gods of the Iliad are not distant and mysterious as are the deities of later epic. There is no need for the poet to explain their motives, for those are evident in their actions. The gods may contribute to the slaying of men, as Apollo contributes to the death of Patroklos; or, more remarkable still, they may themselves be wounded. Such is the fate of both Aphrodite and Ares when they seek to put a stop to the onslaught of Diomedes in book V.

> Now when he had pursued her through the
> dense throng and come on her, then great-
> hearted Tydeus' son thrust with his keen

> spear, and leapt on her and wounded the
> skin of her weak hand; straight through
> the ambrosial raiment that the Graces
> themselves had woven her pierced the
> dart into the flesh, above the springing
> of the palm. Then flowed the goddess's
> immortal blood, such ichor as floweth in
> the blessed gods; for they eat no bread
> neither drink they gleaming wine, where-
> fore they are bloodless and are named
> immortals.

Homer's gods are human in their major characteristics, and, like humans, they may themselves experience wonder and amazement in addition to exciting these reactions in others. Thus when Aphrodite has been wounded "she departed in amaze and was sore troubled" (V.352). By performing feats of wonder men approach, as nearly as they can, to the stature of gods. Ares complains thus to Zeus of Diomedes

> Kypris first he wounded in close fight,
> in the wrist of the hand, and then
> assailed he me, even me, with the might
> of a god. (V. 830-1)

Earlier, Aphrodite had complained to Ares that Diomede "now would fight even with father Zeus" (V. 365). But while Diomede may wound Aphrodite and Ares, but he does so only with the help of Athene. When he seeks to snatch the wounded Aeneas from the protecting Apollo, his valour encounters its

limitations:

> And when the fourth time he sprang at him like a god, then Apollo the Far-darter spake to him with terrible shout: "Think, Tydeides, and shrink, nor desire to match thy spirit with gods; seeing there is no comparision of the race of immortal gods and of men that walk upon the earth." (V. 438-42)

The fundamental sin in the Homeric warrior-code is that of hybris; endeavouring to pass beyond one's limitations. Sometimes these limitations may be known. Patroklos, for example, is warned by Achilles to refrain from pursuing the Trojans to their city and seek only to rescue the ships from being burned.

> Neither do thou, exulting in war and strife, and slaying the Trojans, lead on toward Ilios, lest one of the eternal gods from Olympus come against thee; right dearly doth Apollo the Far-darter love them.
>
> (XVI 90-2)

Yet as Patroklos discovers to his cost, even when these limitations are known, they may be ignored in the exhilaration of present success. Like Diomedes before him, Patroklos encounters the sterm admonition of Apollo, after having attempted three times to defy the god's will:

> Thrice clomb Patroklos on the corner of the lofty wall, and thrice did Apollo force him

> back and smote the shining shield with his immortal hands. But when for the fourth time he came on like a god, then cried far-darting Apollo terribly, and spake winged words: "Give back, Patroklos of the seed of Zeus! Not beneath thy spear is it fated that the city of the valiant Trojans shall fall, nay nor beneath Achilles, a man far better than thou."
>
> (XVI 698-712)

Patroklos is warned of his limitations, but either by choice or by delusion, he ignores them. Sometime, however, a hero does not know his limitations, for he has received no warning. In such cases, the limit of his power may only be discovered by putting it to the test. This is the case for the vast majority of the Greeks and Trojans. In most of the individual encounters of man against man in the Iliad, the encounters themselves are means of putting an individual's valour to the test. Whilst certain events such as the deaths of Sarpedon, Patroklos, Hector and Achilles, and the fall of Troy itself are either destined from the beginning of the poem, or else become inevitable in the course of its unfolding action, the majority of individual combats are means of putting to the test the valour of the fighting heroes in the moment of conflict.

This represents a fundamental difference between

Homer's heroic action and that of Milton or even Virgil. For the later poets the important thing is the operation of Providence to bring about the divine Will. The various conflicts between heroes in the Aeneid or between angels in Paradise Lost are subordinated to this larger pattern. Consequently, warfare in the Aeneid and Paradise Lost tends to become ritualized. We do not feel that anything of great moment hangs upon the result, but the whole action of fighting assumes the quality of a dance, in that particular actions have meaning only in relation to the whole. For Virgil and Milton, heroic action takes place in the context of continuing time and the movement towards the fulfilment of destiny. In Homer, however, we feel that each heroic encounter takes place in one particular moment, and on that moment much depends. For this reason, the marvellous in Homer's epics tends not to be concentrated in particular parts of the poem and revealed in glimpses, but is spread more or less uniformly throughout. There are, of course. moments in the Iliad when extraordinary feats of heroic achievement excite wonder of a particularly strong degree, but these do not, as do such moments in the Aeneid or Paradise Lost, have an effect like the shine of lightning across a dark sky, but constitute an outstanding variation upon a continuing theme.

In early societies marvels were accepted more readily as being at least possible in the real world, and for this reason, the stress they place upon the credibility

and consistency of the poem's world vision is less than in the poetry of later times. Thus when Diomede wounds Aphrodite or Achilles fights the river Scamandros, because the poet himself is a believer, our own suspension of disbelief is facilitated. Virgil, Tasso and Milton, like the poets of "primary" epic, claim to tell the truth, and claim furthermore that the truth they tell is of a national or universal significance. But unlike Homer or the Beowulf poet they cannot rely upon their audience's ready acceptance of the marvellous. When, for example, the Trojans' ships are miraculously turned to nymphs in the Aeneid, we feel too strongly the artifice and the credibility of the poem temporarily falters. The chief skill of the poet of "literary" epic is not to simply portray marvellous feats or events, but to open to our consciousness the wonder of things before not seen, or, if seen, not deemed wonderful. I shall speak at greater length of this revealing of the marvellous where it is not expected when I come to examine the world view held by each of the major epic poets, but for the present, let us look at the marvels of the more apparent kind as they are to be found in Virgil and Milton.

To a large extent, these owe much to Homer-especially those which describe feats of physical strength such as the lifting of great weights. Consider, for example, the manner in which Aeneas slays Murranus in book XII of the Aeneid:

praecipitem scopulo atque ingentis turbine
saxi excutit effunditque solo.

(XII 530-1)

(Aeneas whirled a boulder huge as a hill and knocked him flat beneath his chariot's pole.)[9]

This is very similar to the slaying of Epikles by Ajax in book XII of the Iliad:

With a jagged stone he smote him, a great stone that lay uppermost within the wall, by the battlements. Not lightly could a man hold it in both hands, however strong in his youth, of such mortals as now are, but Aias lifted it, and cast it from above, and shattered the helm of fourfold crest, and all to-brake the bones of the head, and he fell like a diver from the lofty tower, and his life left his bones.

In each case a great boulder is employed as a missile, but Virgil goes beyond Homer to claim that the rock thrown by Aeneas is "huge as a hill". What, in Homer, had been a marvellous feat of athleticism, in Virgil becomes almost magical. Milton goes further still, for in Paradise Lost the warring angels do not throw boulders or rocks but actually hurl mountains at each other:

They pluK't the seated Hills with all thir load,
Rocks, Waters, Woods, and by thir shaggy tops

> Uplifting bore them in thir hands: Amaze,
> Be sure, and terror seiz'd the rebel Host,
> When coming towards them so dread they saw
> The bottom of the Mountains upward turn'd.
>
> (VI. 644-9)

In Virgil, the likening of the boulder lifted by Aeneas to a hill, had been an exaggerating metaphor. Here, however, the hurled missiles are real hills and nothing less. They are thrown, furthermore, not by one hero, but by each and every combatant in both armies:

> So Hills amid the Air encounter'd Hills
> Hurl'd to and fro with jaculation dire,
> That under ground they fought in dismal shade.
>
> (VI 664-6)

In part, Milton's development of this traditional feat of the epic warrior reflects his desire to surpass Homer and Virgil as a singer of wonders. But he is also criticizing war itself in a way neither Homer nor Virgil had done before him. The boulders which Ajax and Aeneas had thrown, had been part of the landscape, but they had not been the landscape itself. In Paradise Lost, however, the destructiveness and futility of war is apparent in the fact that neither army is seriously damaged by the martial conflict, but the environment itself is devastated. As God says:

> War wearied hath perform'd what War can do,
> And to disorder'd rage let loose the reins,

With Mountains as with Weapons arm'd, which makes
Wild work in Heav'n, and dangerous to the main.
(VI. 695-8)

The scene is thus set for the Son's entry into the conflict. His power is essentially Creative rather than destructive, and he begins not by hurling larger or greater mountains than his enemies, but by restoring Heaven to its natural countenance:

Before him Power Divine his way prepar'd;
At his command the uprooted Hills retir'd
Each to his place, they heard his voice and went
Obsequious, Heav'n his wonted Face renew'd,
And with fresh Flow'rets Hill and Valley smil'd.
(VI. 780-4)

This is a wonder beyond the marvels achieved by the warring angels, and looks forward to Milton's development, in the following book, of a kind of wonder hitherto ignored by epic poetry, or else sketched only superficially--that of Creation. Indeed, the Son's routing of the rebel angels is not so much destructive as it is purgative. The Son does not exactly drive them out of heaven, but rather allows them to throw themselves out:

headlong themselves they threw
Down from the verge of Heav'n, Eternal wrath
Burn'd after them to the bottomless pit-
(VI. 864-6)

Even in his conquering aspect, the Son evinces a Creative rather than a destructive power. Having trampled "O'er

Shields and Helms, and helmed heads" (846), He raises the fallen that they might throw themselves out of heaven, rather than be destroyed:

> The overthrown he rais'd, and as a Herd
> Of Goats or timorous flock together throng'd
> Drove them before him.
>
> (VI 836-8)

This simile likening the rebel angels to a flock of frightened beasts may well owe something to that which occurs at the beginning of book XXII of the Iliad, likening the Trojans who have fled from Achilles to fawns:

> Thus they throughout the city, scared like fawns,
> were cooling their sweat.
>
> (XXII. 1-2)

A like simile occurs a little later, describing the pursuit of Hector by Achilles:

> But after Hector sped fleet Achilles chasing him vehemently. And as when on the mountains a hound hunteth the fawn of a deer, having started it from its covert, through glens and glades, and if it crouch to baffle him under a bush, yet scenting it out the hound runneth constantly until he find it; so Hector baffled not Peleus' fleet-footed son.
>
> (XXII 190-4)

Significantly, Milton's simile, unlike Homer's, has no feature to correspond with the pursuer. Certainly, the Son is not likened to a hound. If the simile suggests any role for Him, it is that of a shepherd; the traditional

image of Christ in the Christian religion.

A further difference between Homer's description of the pursuit of Hector by Achilles and Milton's description of the flight of the rebel angels from the Son, is that whereas Achilles pursues one man, the Son drives before Him an entire army. In examining this feat, Steadman quotes from Castelvetro that "an exploit is all the more marvellous if it is performed by a single man, rather than by several persons".[10] Thus the Son's pursuit of the rebel angels surpasses Achilles' pursuit of Hector, or Aeneas' pursuit of Turnus, for it is the accomplishment of one against many, as opposed to one against one or one army against another. Milton's conflict does resemble Homer's in so far as the Son, like Achilles, instructs His own forces to hold back from the pursuit, but the motives of the pursuers for giving this instruction are very different. Achilles commands his followers to refrain from pursuit in the following manner:

> to the host did noble Achilles
> sign with his head, and forbade them to
> hurl bitter darts against Hector, lest any
> smiting him should gain renown, and he
> himself come second.
> (XXII 105-7)

The Son's motive for commanding His own side to forbear from fighting, however, springs not from the desire to enhance his own glory, but to "glorify" (VI. 725) the

Father:

> Stand still in bright array ye Saints, here stand
> Ye angels arm'd, this day from Battle rest;
> .....
> The punishment to other hand belongs;
> Vengeance is his, on whose he sole appoints.
>
> (VI. 801-8)

Thus far, Milton's employment of the epic effect of wonder can be seen to owe much to Homer and Virgil. He develops their concept of heroic achievement for his own purposes, and also seems to surpass them by describing feats which outstrip those of their heroes even when judged by the simplest idea of what a hero is. But every heroic event so far examined may be seen to have some source in either Homer, Virgil or both.

This is true also of many of the marvels performed by the rebel angels. These fall into three basic categories: the raising of monuments, shape-shifting and Satan's enterprise against man. For the moment, I shall look only at the first category, since the second is more properly classed as a "false marvel" and the third bears directly upon Milton's didactic purpose which I intend to examine in much closer detail elsewhere.

There are two major diabolical constructions in Paradise Lost: Pandaemonium and the bridge with which Sin and Death connect Hell to the created universe. In

describing them, Milton was faced with the difficulty of presenting both as artifacts worthy of wonder, yet at the same time suggesting their ethical corruption and ultimate futility. To stress the latter significance would be to weaken the former, yet to place too much emphasis upon the splendor of the rebel angels' achievements would run the risk of misdirecting the reader's sympathies. How did Milton resolve this problem? The wonder excited by Pandaemonium is similar to that inspired by the wall which the Greeks rear before their ships in Book VII of the Iliad. In each poem the marvellous construction is of prodigious size and strength, is raised as a defence against anticipated warfare and constitutes a challenge or an affront to divinity. The wall of the Greeks is described as follows:

> And when day was not yet, but still twilight
> of night, then was the chosen folk of the Achaians
> gathered together around the pyre, and made one barrow
> about it, rearing it from the plain for all alike; and
> thereto built they a wall and lofty towers, a bulwark
> for their ships and for themselves. In the midst thereof
> made they gates well-compacted, that through them
> might be a way for chariot-driving, And without
> they dug a deep foss beside it, broad and great,
> and planted a palisade therein.
>
> (Iliad VII. 433-41)

The rebel angels' construction is incomparably larger, but in many of its details, and in part of its purpose and significance, it differs from that of the Greeks in degree rather than fundamental nature. Yet that difference of degree is great: if the portal of the Greeks' wall is worthy of admiration in that it permits chariots to pass through it, what can be said of the gateway of Pandaemonium which can accomodate an army?

> Thir summons called
> From every Band and squared Regiment,
> By place or choice the worthiest; they anon,
> With hunderds and with thousands, trooping came,
> Attended. All access was throng'd.
>
> (I. 737-61)

Milton's monument also surpasses that of Homer in the speed with which it is raised. In the Iliad, the Greeks begin their task in the "twilight of night" (433) and complete it by the following evening--a time span of less than twenty-four hours. The rebel angels, however, surpass all human endeavours and accomplish

> in an hour,
> What in an age they, with incessant toil
> And hands innumerable, scarce perform.
>
> (I. 697-9)

Yet, with masterful subtlety, Milton turns this very speed into an indication of the ultimate futility and insubstantiality

of all diabolical enterprises. The word which suggests both the marvellous speed and the inner corruption of the fallen angels' achievement is "exhalation":

> Anon, out of the earth, a Fabrick huge
> Rose like an Exhalation, with the sound
> Of Dulcet Symphonies and voices sweet,
> Built like a Temple, where Pilasters round
> Were Set, and Doric pillars overlaid
> With Golden Architrave;
> (I. 710-5)

Milton uses "exhalation" in its now archaic sense as "a body or portion of vapour, usually enkindled vapour; a meteor" (O.E.D.3). Until even as recent a time as the nineteenth century it was conjectured that meteors were formed from vapours arising from within the earth. The fact that meteors have often been interpreted as portents of doom may relate to this belief, for exhalations were traditionally associated with corruption, ill-health and corporeal excess. Consider, for example, this use of "exhalation", quoted in the O.E.D. from Rowland's Martin Marnall written in 1610:

> So noysome an exhalation, that birds are poysoned with the very breath and ayre thereof.

Milton was not the first writer to use the world figuratively for the purpose of making an ethical observation. In his Pierce Pennilesse's Supplication to the Devil, written in 1592, Thomas Nashe speaks of

> Exhalations, drawen up to the heaven of honor, from the dunghill of object fortune.

Even as late as 1862, in a use of the word very much like that of Milton, Charles Merivate wrote in his Romans Under the Empire that

> Nero's golden horse had risen like an exhalation, and like an exhalation it disappeared.

In Augustinian terms, the resemblance which the arising of Pandaemonium bears to an exhalation, reflects the degeneration of a God-given nature perverted by evil will, from being to non-being.11 Although "exhalation" suggests the speed with which Pandaemonium appears, it also implies that the monument is itself like a breath which will dissipate into air. It is surprising, given this understanding of what an exhalation is, that Milton found a place for such vapours in his description of the prelapsarian world. Yet, in Book V, when Adam and Eve sing their hymn to the rising of morning (153ff) the word reappears and we see how exhalations play their part in Creation:

> Ye Mists and Exhalations that now rise
> From Hill or steaming Lake, dusKie or grey,
> Till the Sun paint your fleecie skirts with Gold,
> In honour to the World's great Author rise,
> Whether to deck with Clouds the uncoloured skie
> Or wet the thirstie Earth with Falling showers,
> Rising or Falling still advance his praise.
>
> (V. 185-91)

The reappearance of "exhalation" might, of course, be simply accidental. But since it appears nowhere in Paradise Lost where it does not either threaten to pollute the Creation, or else is seen to play a part in it, the possibility that we are invited to discern a correspondence between the two passages should not be too readily dismissed. If Pandaemonium is an exhalation it may be that the words of this hymn are applicable to it as well as to the mists and vapours of Eden. "Rising or Falling", these mists "still advance his praise". The great pride of the rebel angels, symbolized in the arising of Pandaemonium, is that, notwithstanding the Fall, they can still arise in defiance of God's will and withdraw themselves, and man, from the universal chorus of His praise. Throughout the poem, Satan and his followers place great emphasis upon the constrast between rising and falling, and speak with terror of their fall and wondering self-esteem of their defiant rise. When the rebel angels roll in confusion on the fiery lake, Satan commands them thus:

> Awake, arise, or be for ever fall'n! (1.330)

The act of arising and the predicament of being fallen are here seen as contrasting states. The fallen angels, it seems, are faced with a clear choice: either renewed action and the possibility of recovery, or the relinquishing of struggle and the acceptance of total defeat. But in the clear, tranquil hymn to morning this gulf no longer exists.

"Rising or Falling" the exhalation "still advance" God's praise. Earlier in Book I we had been told by the narrator that all that the rebel angels do is by

> the Will/And high permission of all-ruling Heaven. (I. 211-2)

Surely the poem is enriched if we understand Pandaemonium to be an exhalation like the exhalations instructed to arise by Adam and Eve. Wonderful as the miraculous arising of Pandaemonium in book I is, in book V it is discovered to be accomodated to the still more wonderful, stll more miraculous dance of Creation.

If this understanding of "exhalation" is accepted, it makes for a sharp and revealing difference between Milton's attitude to his angels' monument and Homer's attitude to that of the Greeks. Both constructions constitute an affront to divinity, but whereas Pandaemonium is a deliberate challenge to God's authority, the Greeks' wall offends simply because, before building it, they "gave not excellent hecatombs to the gods". The only enemies the Greeks wished to challenge were the Trojans. That the Gods were offended was an unforeseen consequence of their negligence. This difference marks a contrast between the jealous gods of Homeric epic and the omnipotent God of Milton's poem. Homer's gods respond with both jealousy and wonder to the Greeks' achievement:

> the gods sate by Zeus, the lord of lightning, and marvelled at the great work of the mail-clad Achaians.
>
> (Iliad VII 440-1)

Poseidon exclaims:

> Verily the fame Hereof shall reach as far as the dawn spreadeth, and men will forget the wall that I and Phoebus Apollo built with travail for the hero Laomedon.
>
> (Iliad VII 450-2)

Zeus then concedes to Poseidon's wish and gives him permission, when the Greeks have departed from Troy, to "burst this wall asunder and scatter it all into the sea" (VII 459). Thus both Pandaemonium and the wall of the Greeks, for all their splendour, are seen to be far inferior to the power of divinity. But whereas the Olympians exercise a destructive intervening power, and do so through jealousy and awe of the Greeks' work, Milton's Divinity is quietly revealed as the true Author of all miracles, from whose Power no lesser being can ever extricate himself.

A similar fusion of the marvellous and a sense of ultimate futility may be found with respect to the second demonic construction in Paradise Lost---the bridge with which Sin and Death connect Hell to the universe. Like Pandaemonium, the bridge is an object of wonder. It is "of wondrous length" (II. 1028) and is fashioned "by wondrous Art Pontifical". Satan himself marvels at the sight:

> near the foot
> Of this new wondrous Pontifice...at sight
> Of that stupendious Bridge his joy increas'd,
> Long he admiring stood.
>
> (X 347-52)

In a fine simile, Milton then proceeds to liken this bridge to the bridge of ships built by Xerxes over the Hellespont in 479 BC as a causeway for his Asian armies:

> So, if great things to small may be compar'd,
> Xerxes, the Liberty of Greece to yoke,
> From Susa his Memnonian Palace high
> Came to the Sea, and over Hellespont
> Bridging his way, Europe with Asia, join'd
> And scourg'd with many a stroke th'indignant waves.
>
> (X. 306-11)

This simile is appropriate in several ways. In addition to the fact that both Death and Xerxes are builders of prodigious bridges which win ready access over an area hitherto not easily accessible, there is the further correspondence that both are tyrants embarking upon a mission of conquest and slaughter. The image of Xerxes lashing the waves in his pride and anger also looks back to the description of Death's restraining the fluid motion of the elements of Chaos with his icy mace:

> Death with his Mace petrific, cold and dry,
> As with a Trident smote, and fix't as firm
> As Delos floating once; the rest his look
> Bound with Gorgonian rigor not to move.
>
> (X. 294-7)

Although the strict correspondence is between Xerxes and Death, in his role as King, Emperor and Conqueror of new worlds, Xerxes also resembles Satan. Thus, in addition

to suggesting the grandeur of the engineering skills of Sin and Death, the simile also prepares us for their imminent encounter with Satan (X. 327) and Satan's joy at beholding their work, a joy that is greater for knowing that their work is also his own:

> Great joy was at their meeting, and at sight
> Of that stupendious Bridge his joy increas'd.
>
> (X. 350-1)

Thus far, there is nothing in the simile that does not contribute to the predominant effect of awe and wonder at an achievement which is marvellous for all its destructive and tragic significance. But for the reader familiar with Herodotus, as Milton could have depended upon his contemporary readers to be, the simile also carries a more subtle significance. For Xerxes' historical campaign to reduce Greece to slavery, notwithstanding its pomp and splendour, was perhaps the most complete military fiasco the world has ever witnessed. Xerxes built two bridges across the Hellespont, both of which were utterly destroyed by storms; the first before his army had even embarked, the second a year later, when he returned in total defeat to the western shores of the Hellespont. Xerxes' lashing of the "indignant waves" is thus an act of frustration as much as pride, and in Herodotus typifies the rage of a monarch confronted with defeat and thwarted ambition as well as the haughty decree of a mighty Emperor. This meaning is also present in the word "indignant", for in

Latin, the verb "indignari" means "to regard as unworthy" rather than "to resent", and is used more often of an indomitable enemy than of a foe who is vanquished and bitter. The correspondence may be taken even further, for Xerxes, like Satan achieved a partial success which led to the greater glory of his enemies. Just as Satan's invasion of earth led to the destruction of Eden, Xerxes did succeed in burning the Acropolis. But from the ruins of the old city arose the new Athens of Pericles. In a similar way, from the ruins of Paradise shall come "a Paradise within" which is "happier far". In likening the enterprise of Satan, Sin and Death to that of Xerxes, Milton not only indicates the marvellous nature of their feat, he also subtly suggests its ultimate futility.

(II) The False Marvel

Despite the fact that both the raising of Pandaemonium and the building of the bridge between Hell and the universe contain a significance beyond that of simple "maraviglia", neither achievement may be really categorized as a "false marvel". The power which brings both constructions to be is real, and their actual existence is not denied. Neither monument relies upon the beholder's ignorance of its true nature of cause for the marvel it excites, but both are genuine spectacles of wonder in themselves. This is not the case, however, with certain other of Satan's marvels,

especially those which take the form of shape-shifting. Satan himself is a master of deceit and most of the "wonders" he performs individually depend upon the deliberate misleading of somebody else. Before I proceed to examine Milton's "false marvels" in greater detail, however, I shall look at the precedents to be found in Homer and Virgil.

The Homeric "false marvel" may be defined most generally as any event which has the appearance of being miraculous but can in fact be explained by the laws of natural phenomena. It does not, as does the Miltonic "false marvel" depend upon any element of mednacity for its existence. Sometimes deceit does play a part in Homer's epics, but then there is no sense of culpability attributed to the deceiver. An example of this kind of deceit is Athene's appearing to Hector in the shape of Deiphobus in Book XXII of the Iliad and persuading him to fight Achilles. Another example is Apollo's luring Achilles away from the fleeing Trojans by appearing to him in the shape of Hector and acting as a decoy by pretending to fly from him. But neither of these events, for all their guile, is really a "false marvel", for the change of shape is genuine and not a contraction of malleable limbs and body into another body. These tricks do not depend for their success (as Satan's penetration of the serpent does) upon exciting the beholder's wonder at an apparent miracle. Quite the contrary--Hector and Achilles must be made to feel that

there is nothing supernatural about the figure before them if the deceit is to work. Thus while there is deceit of a supernatural kind in Homer's epics, it does not work by pretending towards magical power that is not there, rather it functions by disguising the magical virtues which are there. These changes of shape in Homer cannot therefore be called "false Marvels".

The "false marvel" in Homer differs from that in Milton, in that nobody is fooled. Whenever an event occurs which seems marvellous but isn't, the characters describe it as such only ironically. An example of the Homeric "false marvel" occurs in Book XXI of the Iliad when Achilles, whilst wreaking havoc among the Trojans, suddenly comes across Lykaon, a young son of Priam whom he had himself taken prisoner and sold into slavery on a previous occasion when he had surprised the prince cutting down a fig-tree. Now, only eleven days after Lykaon has been ransomed from slavery, the two heroes meet for a second time. As Achilles startles Lykaon foundering in the bloodied river Skamandras, he calls upon him thus:

> "Ha! verily great marvel is this
> that I behold with my eyes, surely then
> will the proud Trojans whom I have slain
> rise up again from beneath the murky gloom,
> since thus hath this man come back escaped
> from his pitiless fate, though sold into goodly

> Lemnos, neither had the deep of the hoary
> sea stayed him, that holdeth many against
> their will. But come then, of our spear's
> point shall he taste that I may see and
> learn in my mind whether linewise he shall
> come back even from beneath, or
> whether the life giving Earth shall
> hold him down, she that holdeth so
> even the strong."
>
> (Iliad XXI 55-63)

Here Achilles is not the butt of any irony on the part of the poet, but is himself speaking ironically. He does not seriously believe that Lykaon has returned from the dead, but vocalizes his surprise at seeing him in this way so as to make mention of the Underworld and thus reassure Lykaon (and us) that that is where the young warrior is destined to soon depart. The appearance of the recurrent epithet "life-giving" to describe the Earth alerts us to the ironic tone in Achilles' voice, for the earth which is soon to cover Lykaon is not to bestow life but will rather seal him in death. Needless to say, Lykaon himself, who knows better than anyone that he has not returned from the dead, is making no attempt to deceive Achilles in any way, and is just as surprised to see Achilles as Achilles is to see him:

> the other came
> near amazed, fain to touch his knees, for his

soul longed exceedingly to flee from evil death
and black destruction.
(Iliad XX 64-7)

Lykaon's innocence of any miraculous power enriches the irony of Achilles' words, for even as the Greek hero speaks of dead men being snatched back into life and light, Lykaon knows that his own life is soon to be snatched into the darkness of death.

There are no instances of the Homeric "false marvel" in the Aeneid, but Virgil does employ a comparable effect in bestowing great moment and significance upon events which, in themselves, are quite unmagical and common occurrences. One very fine example of this can be found at the beginning of Book VII, when the Trojans are moved by hunger to eat the wheaten base of cakes upon which they have laid freshly gathered fruits. As they do so, Iulus jestingly remarks that they are eating their tables:

"heus! etiam mensas consumimus, inquit Iulus,
nec plura adludens. ea vox audita laborum
prima tulit finem primamque loquentis ab ore
eripuit paber ac stupefactus numine pressit.
(VII. 116-9)

("Look!" cried Iulus, "We're eating our tables,
too!" He stopped; he'd meant to joke, but that
word marked where trouble's end began. Straight
from his lips Aeneas seized it, but dared not
speak, for awe.)

The reason for Aeneas' wonder and amazement is the prophetic curse spoken by the harpy Celaeno in Book III:

> "accipite ergo animis atque haec mea figite
> dicta. quae Phaebo pater omnipotens, mihi Phoebus
> Apollo praedixit, vobis Furiarum ego maxima pando.
> Italiam cursu petitis ventisque vocatis; ibitis
> Italiam portusque intrare licebit. sed non ante
> datam cingetis moenibus urbem quam vos dira fames
> nostraeque iniuria caedis ambesas subigat malis
> absumere mensas."
> (III. 250-7)
>
> ("...hear this, and nail it to your heart--
> the Almighty told it to Phoebus, Phoebus to
> me; now I chief of the Furies, declare it to you.
> You sail for Italy and pray for winds:
> you'll go to Italy, pass into her harbors,
> but never wall your promised city round
> till hunger, and guilt for what you murdered here,
> shall make you gnaw your tables halfway through")

In a sense, Virgil's "false marvel" is the very opposite of Homer's; whereas Lykaon's appearance before Achilles has the semblance of a marvel but in fact wins nobody's belief in the power of man to return from the dead, the Trojans' eating of their wheaten "tables" has a self-evident rational explanation, but it is the very simplicity and everydayness of the occurrence which causes Aeneas to feel genuine astonishment. His wonder at this point, unlike that of

Achilles before Lykaon, is true wonder, although there is nothing marvellous about the circumstances which inspire it, save in relation to the prophecy delivered years before. This "false marvel" in the Aeneid also furnishes a very rich comparison with Paradise Lost as regards divine pronouncement and the merely partial understanding of them available to the limited consciousness of lesser beings. Calaeno's prophecy comes ultimately from Jupiter, but she herself hears it from Apollo. When she voices it, she pronounces it as a curse, even though that is her own interpretation and, in the event, proves to be inaccurate. The Trojans, themselves, when they first hear the prophecy, also interpret it as a curse and are at once discouraged:

> at sociis subita gelidus formidine sanguis
> deriguit: cecidere animi, nec iam amplius
> armis, sed votis precibusque iubent exposcere
> pacem. (III 259-61)
>
> (An icy fear congealed
> their blood; their spirits fell. They'd
> fight no more, but beg for peace.)

But in fact the divine purpose is quite other than they suppose, and, ironically, it is only when Calaeno's "curse" is fulfilled that the Trojans realize that the land in which they are now is that intended for them by the gods. What had been feared as a curse is now revealed as a blessing.

Milton also makes use of the gap between divine pronouncements and lesser being's limited understanding of them--especially with regard to Satan's interpretation of the Son's sentence upon him. The Son sentences the serpent with these words:

> Because thou hast done this, thou art accurst
> Above all Cattle, each Beast of the Field;
> Upon thy Belly groveling thou shalt go,
> And dust thou shall eat all the days of thy life.
> Between Thee and the Woman I will put
> Enmiby, and between thine and her seed;
> Her seed shall bruise thy head, thou bruise his heel.
>
> (X. 175-81)

In Genesis, there is no evidence to suggest that the serpent is anything but a serpent; the identification of the serpent with Satan did not take place until later times. Milton clearly believed that the Temptation was Satan's work, and follows Rabbinical and Christian tradition in interpreting God's sentence upon the serpent as a curse upon Satan, phrased "in mysterious terms" (X. 173). But his poetic development of theology owes as much to Virgil as it does to The Bible, for Milton follows the Roman poet in giving first the prophecy, then the listener's understanding of it, and finally a glimpse of its fulfilment. Satan, like the Trojans before him, hears but misinterprets the word of God. But whereas they had heard a blessing and interpreted it as a curse, Satan hears a "curse" (X. 174) yet

thinks he has escaped punishment. Thus he boasts to his followers in Hell:

> True is, mee also he hath judg'd, or rather
> Mee not, but the brute Serpent in whose shape
> Man I deceiv'd: that which to mee belongs,
> Is enmity, which he will put between
> Mee and Mankind; I am to bruise his heel;
> His Seed, when is not set, shall bruise my head;
> A World who would not purchase with a bruise,
> Or much more grievous pain?
>
> (X. 494-501)

Clearly, Satan is not so well versed in theology as is Milton, for he fails to see that the "Seed" of the woman who shall bruise him, is none other than the Son in his aspect as Jesus Christ. Here there is a further difference between Virgil's prophecy and Milton's, for in the Aeneid we are as much surprised as are the Trojans themselves at the way in which Calaeno's oracle is fulfilled. In Paradise Lost, however, no sooner has the sentence been passed, than the poet explains its significance, a significance with which the reader is already familiar:

> So spake this Oracle, then verifi'd
> When Jesus son of Mary second Eve
> Saw Satan fall like Lightning down from Heav'n,
> Prince of the Air; then rising from his Grave
> Spoil'd Principalities and Powers, triumpht

In open show, and with ascension bright
Captivity led captive through the Air,
The Realm itself of Satan long usurpt,
Whom he shall tread at last under our feet.

(X. 182-90)

The fulfilment of the prophecy in Milton's poem, unlike the eating of the wheaten "tables" in Virgil's, does not surprise us. Why is this so? The major explanation is that Milton is retelling a prophecy of which the interpretation was widely known, whereas Virgil is adding a prophecy all of his own; but there is one further reason why the fulfilment of Virgil's oracle does surprise us while that of Milton does not, and that is that it defies our expectations by not being a marvel. Thus Virgil, with a subtlely unequalled by any other epic poet, inspires wonder in his readers by the very absence of the wonderful in this part of his poem. The fulfilment of Milton's prophecy does not constitute a "false marvel" in this way, but it does make possible a "false marvel" in Satan's boasting to his followers. Displaying a total misunderstanding of the price he must pay, Satan speaks of his enterprise against man as an heroic achievement worthy of wonder:

Him by fraud I have seduced
From his Creator; and, the more to increase
Your wonder, with an apple. He, thereat
Offended-worth your laughter-hath given up
Both his beloved Man and all this world.

(X. 485-9)

But, as the prophecy regarding the Son's bruising of Satan has reminded us, God has not given up His beloved Man and all the world. Satan's achievement is certainly daring and cunning, but compared to the fulfilment of that prophecy, it is a "false marvel". As if to make this clear, Satan's exhortation of his followers to marvel at his success, is immediately followed by a genuine miracle as he and all the rebel angels are transformed to serpents (X. 510-47). This miraculous metamorphosis makes apparent a little more of the divine prophecy which Satan has too soon set aside. Hitherto, he had spoken of the serpent as a "brute" (495) --a mere tool for his purpose, and had rejoiced to think that God's vengeance was directed towards it rather than upon himself. But now Satan discovers the serpent within himself, and the first part of the prophesied punishment, --that the serpent shall eat dust "all the days of (his) life" is brought to fulfilment, as Satan and the other serpents are forced to eat the ashes which appear to them as fruit. This they must do annually for the rest of time

> To dash thir pride,and joy for man seduc't.
>
> (X. 577)

The poetic justice of the rebel angels having to eat fruit

> like that/Which grew in Paradise, the bait of Eve/
> Us'd by the Tempter
>
> (X. 550-2)

is self-evident. But the nature of the curse they actually

do suffer, is strangely similar to that the Trojans feared they would suffer. In each case the victims are to be driven by hunger to consume something inedible. Milton describes the fallen angels' predicament thus:

> Thir appetite with gust, instead of Fruit
> Chew'd bitter Ashes, which th'offended taste
> With spattering noise rejected: oft they assay'd,
> Hunger and thirst constraining, drugg'd as oft,
> With hatefullest disrelish writh'd thir jaws
> With soot and cinders fill'd.
>
> (X. 365-70)

There is nothing in the Bible to correspond with this scene, except the curse itself, passed upon the serpent in Genesis that it should eat dust all the days of its life. There is some precedent for the passage in Dante's Purgatorio[12], where the poet finds a host of famished spirits below a graft of the Tree of Knowledge, but in its details of description, Milton's passage is closest to Virgil. In the way they rush upon their intended food over and over again, only to encounter disappointment and disgust, the fallen angels resemble the Trojans, who attempt three times to enjoy their feast of cattle on Calaeno's island, but on each occasion find their repast fouled by Calaeno and her harpies. Perhaps this similarity is merely coincidental, but it is also possible that Milton has developed the curse in the Aeneid and applied it to his fallen angels in a way it did

not apply to the Trojans.

In addition to fulfilling the first part of the Son's curse upon Satan, the miracle which changes him from angel to serpent, also looks back to the moment in the previous book when Satan had entered the serpent's body. The previous donning of serpent form had not been a genuine metamorphosis, but a permeation of one body by another. This penetration of the serpent is not a miracle, for it does not defy any of the laws of nature. Quite the contrary, it is in perfect accordance with the angel's natural ability to dilate or contract the material of their bodies. When the rebel angels had been pummelled with mountains during the war in heaven, they had employed this very power to "Wind/Out" (VI. 659-60) of their crushed armour and so be free. When Satan animates the serpent, he does so by actually entering it, thus committing a bizarre form of bestiality:

> In at his mouth
> The devil entered, and his brutal sense,
> In heart or head, possessing, soon inspired
> With act intelligential.
>
> (IX. 187-90)

When he is himself transformed into a serpent, however, the change is genuine. There is no element of deceit involved, no rational explanation available as to how the metamorphosis is performed, all we can do is acknowledge it as a miracle:

> He wonder'd, but not long
> Had leisure, wond'ring at himself now more;

His visage drawn he felt to sharp and spare,
His Arms clung to his Ribs, his Legs entwining
Each other, till supplanted down he fell
A monstrous Serpent...

(X. 509-14)

A further contrast between the two moments when Satan assumes serpent form, may be found with regard to his power of speech. During the Temptation of Eve, he employs the apparent miracle of a beast being endowed with reason and language to seduce her into believing that the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was possessed of magical powers. He had begun by telling her not to wonder, but the very fact of his speaking is itself designed to provoke the opposite effect:

Wonder not, sovran Mistres, if perhaps
Thou canst, who art sole Wonder.

(IX. 532-3)

Almost at once, Eve is "at the voice much marvelling" and "not unamaz'd" at the apparent marvel of

Language of Man pronounc't
By Tongue of Brute. (IX. 553-4)

But the marvel is apparent and stands in direct contrast to the deprivation of the power of speech suffered by the rebel angels in the next Book, when they are forced to adopt serpent bodies whether they would or not. This deprivation of speech causes no less wonder in Satan than his own speaking through the serpent had excited in Eve:

> So having said, a while he stood, expecting
> Thir universal short and high applause
> To fill his eare, when the contrary he hears
> On all sides, from innumerable tongues
> A dismal universal hiss, the sound
> Of public scorn; he wonder'd, but not long
> Had leasure, wondring at himself now more.
>
> (X. 504-10)

These serpents, unlike Satan in the serpent, are not able to speak but can only hiss like the beasts they have become. Once again, a "false marvel" is measured against a true miracle and shown to be inferior in power and authenticity. For Milton, unlike Homer and Virgil before him, the "False Marvel", for all the wonder it excites, is fundamentally mendacious and hollow. He does not, as they do, take delight in the gap between appearance and reality, and use that gap to present some truth hitherto not seen, but rather he views that gap with distrust as a source of deceit and delusion which can only be bridged by the direct revelation of truth. For Milton, the falsity of the "false marvel" is equated with ethical deficiency, whereas for Homer and Virgil, (albeit in different ways) it serves to fill the reader or auditor with awe before a universe complex beyond man's understanding. I have so far examined marvels of action and achievement in Homer, Virgil and Milton, and also compared their presentations of "false marvels". I come now to the most difficult task:

the comparison between their world views and concepts of reality and the relation of these to the marvellous as a defining characteristic of epic.

(III) The Marvellous and Reality

One of the chief differences between Homer's world view and those held by Virgil and Milton is this: whereas every person and thing in Homer's epics is important in and for itself, and bears no relation to any other person or thing save by the influence of direct action, in both the Aeneid and Paradise Lost all persons and phenomena exist in relation to, rather than simultaneously with each other. With regard to persons, for example, Homer is content to present individuals. His Achilles, Hector and Odysseus may reflect valiant, noble or cunning types, but none of them are offered as examples of what men ought to be. Virgil's Aeneas, on the other hand, assumes a symbolic significance never to be found in Homer's heroes. In Aeneas, Virgil presents the ideal of Rome, whereas the self-sufficient heroes of the Iliad and Odyssey represent nothing other than themselves. Milton went still further than Virgil, for Adam is the representative not of one city or even one civilization, but of the whole of Mankind. This does not mean that Aeneas and Adam are offered as models of ideal standards of behaviour and that every decision they make is sanctioned by the poet as correct.

Clearly this is not so--both make mistakes which threaten to overthrow the destiny bestowed upon them, and which in Adam's case, actually do overthrow that destiny. But both heroes also have the capacity to learn from their mistakes and to grow by experience and instruction. Thus, while "literary" epic may not wholly fit Sir Philip Sidney's prescription that poetry should lead men to virtue by depicting virtuous action in its chief protagonists, the overall design of both the Aeneid and Paradise Lost does harmonize with Dryden's demand that "the design of (the heroic poem) is to form the mind to heroic virtue by example; 'tis conveyed in verse that it may delight, while it instructs."[13] In "literary" epic, enormous questions, not always directly relevant to the poems' immediate action, are introduced and the whole nature of man and the universe are made to need explanation. Homer's epics, on the other hand, raise no such questions and convey no lessons or instruction. This absence of any didactic purpose in Homer's epics marks a difference between his poems and those of Virgil and Milton, not only with regard to characters and overall design, but also moments where the poet's understanding of the world shines through merely local descriptions. Yet whilst Homer's world view and understanding of reality may be fundamentally different from those of Virgil or Milton, they nevertheless still evince the marvellous. Let us turn to Book III of the Iliad, where Helen, beholding the mustering

of the Greek forces below the walls of Troy, asks where are her brothers:

> two captains of the host can I not see,
> even Kastor tamer of horses and Polydeukes
> the skillful boxer, mine own brethren, whom
> the same mother bore. Either they came not in
> the company from lovely Lakedaimon; or they
> came hither indeed in their seafaring ships,
> but now will not enter into the battle of the
> warriors, for fear of the many scornings
> and revilings that are mine.
> So said she; but them the life-giving earth
> held fast there in Lakedaimon in their dear
> native land.
>
> (Iliad III, 238-46)

As in the episode where Achilles encounters Lykaon in Book XXI, the topos "life-giving earth" occurs in a context where the earth does not bestow life but seals men in death. But this juxtaposition of the two aspects of earth as giver and taker of life, is not, as is the later instance, a focus of irony. Here the words are spoken not by Achilles but by the great poet himself, and they are not spoken in anger or feigned bewilderment, but are dropped into the tranquil rhythm of the verse almost without a ripple. C.S. Lewis, in his discussion of "primary" epic in A Preface to Paradise Lost quotes the latter part of this passage and follows it with a comment by Ruskin, which is insurpassable:

> Note here the high poetical truth ~~comed~~ carried to the extreme. The poet has to speak of the earth in sadness, but he will not let that sadness affect or change his thoughts of it. No; though Castor and Potlux be dead, yet the earth is our mother still, fruitful, life-giving. These are the facts of the thing. I see nothing else than these. Make what you will of them.[14]

The poet's unwillingness to change his thoughts about the benevolence and fecundity of the earth even when he has to speak of it in sadness is very different from Achilles' reference to the "life-giving earth" before Lykaon. Here there is a sense of a clash between human emotions and the large indifferent background of the real world, but in the Lykaon episode, Achilles' own emotions penetrate the world and seem to animate it with his own fury so that the earth is no longer indifferent nor even part of the background, but seems to reach for Lykaon with a will of its own as if to crush the upstart worker of "false marvels" who would seek to escape its grasp. The Lykaon episode may be terrifying and pathetic, but the terror and pathos are very different to those we encounter here. Lykaon's death is wholly intended--at least by Achilles, and in the sense I have just stated, it is intended by the earth also. But the pathos of this moment, as C.S. Lewis

writes, "~~shines~~ strikes hard because it seems unintended and inevitable like the pathos of real life".[15] But in addition to its pathos, this reference to "the life-giving earth" also displays a certain splendour. There is no irony as in the Lykaon episode, nor is there a romantic sense of the consoling beauty of nature. The life-giving properties of the earth do not constitute a "false marvel" nor do they speak of a Wordsworthian flowing unity between Man and the universe. But even while it is unable or unwilling to restore life to dead men, the vibrant beauty and fecundity of the earth is never doubted as a fact. That beauty and fecundity exist in isolation from man and here are seen to have no concern for him, but they are there and they are worthy of wonder.

A similar effect may be found with relation to the other topoi which occur in Homer's epics. These are much more than "stock" devices, included in the poem to jog the memory of the rhapsode as he recites without the aid of the written word. They reflect the unchanging majesty of a world which is not directly concerned with human joys or suffering. When Aristotle wrote of "to thaumaston" in the Iliad, he was referring primarily to such marvels of achievement as Achilles' pursuit of Hector, but it is not just in the exploits of heroes and gods that we find the marvellous in Homer's epics, nor even in the catalogues of ships and allies; it is to be found also in the earth

under our feet, in "the wine bright (not dark) sea" and in "the rosy-fingered dawn". These things are beautiful in themselves and that beauty is not cancelled even when it is juxtaposed with objects or events of the greatest ugliness or misery. No other poet has ever held such an all-embracing picture of reality. In Virgil or Milton, the paradox of life and death requires explanation and elucidation rather than simple reflection, and a moral is almost always drawn from the explanation given.

Compare, for example, Milton's descriptions of dawn before and after the Fall, with Homer's descriptions of the earth in the opposing context of life and death. In the hymn of Adam and Eve in Book V of Paradise Lost, the dawn is described with great joy as "smiling" to meet the star Hesperus:

> Fairest of stars, last in the train of night,
> If better thou belong not to the dawn,
> Sure pledge of day, that crown'st the smiling morn
> With thy bright circlet.
>
> (V. 166-9)

Milton's descriptions of dawn are loosely constructed around the Homeric model, but the word "smiling" adds a dimension not to be found in Homer. Although Homer's dawn is a goddess as well as or instead of a phenomenon, she is felt to be less conscious or participating than is Milton's. Milton's dawn is not strictly a person, but it reflects

the benign properties of nature and the kinship between man and his environment in a way quite alien to Homer. Homer's dawn may "bring light to mortals and to immortals", but it does so because that is what dawn does, not because it (or she) chooses to do so. But if the prelapsarian dawn is much more distant, even though it is identical in all appearances to the dawn which arose before. In Book XI, Eve addresses Adam thus:

> see the Morn/All unconcern'd with our unrest, begins
> Her rosie progress smiling.
>
> (XI. 173-5)

Just as Homer's earth is "life-giving" whether it yields fruit for the hungry or whether it holds fast the dead, Milton's dawn is described as "smiling" whether it shines upon the fallen or the unfallen. This refusal, on the part of both poets, to change their thoughts about the beauties of nature, regardless of their context, might be thought to mark a similarity between them, but in fact the opposite is true. For whereas Homer's universe is consistently unconcerned with man, Milton's moves from being in harmony with him to being indifferent to his sufferings. For Homer, the fecundity of the earth is a thing of beauty and wonder regardless of its context, but for Milton, the significance of dawn's smile after the Fall, is totally different from that it had borne before it and this difference is directly related to context.

The second smile speaks of man's alienation from nature; an alienation that was unnecessary and is explained by the Fall. The dawn's lack of concern with Adam's and Eve's unrest, is thus a matter of grief and misery. The fact that Homer's "life-giving earth" holds fast the dead, on the other hand, requires no explanation, and demands no response. The earth is the earth and man is man, and neither bears any kinship to the other. In Milton's universe, however, every part exists in relation to every other part, and what was once a smile of joy and benevolence becomes a smile of cold indifference due to the change in state undergone by the beholders. Indeed, the full horror of the Fall in Paradise Lost is suggested just as much by those things which remain unchanged as by those which undergo radical degeneration.

Homer's taking the paradox of life and death for granted, and his lack of interest in explanations for the mysteries of life constitute both an advantage and a disadvantage for his poems compared to those of Virgil and Milton. He is at an advantage because his ready embracing of contradictions imbues his work with a tranquility and integrity unmatched by any other poet. The meaning of the Iliad and Odyssey is immanent in the poem's style. It is not complicated by any thesis which the poet is wishing to assert, and yet the poems still enjoy a high seriousness and verisimilitude due to the completeness

of their world-vision. They stand above the romantic epics of Boiardo and Ariosto because they do not sacrifice credibility to invention. Indeed the Homeric epics are the most credible of the epic genre; the reason for this being largely the topoi which create a sense of consistency and familiarity without forfeiting the effect of surprise essential to epic wonder. Of all the Homeric topoi, those which most successfully fuse the familiar with the unexpected are the conventional epithets which precede or follow proper names. These epithets occur so often as to constitute the very identity of the characters they describe, so when they appear unexpectedly or in a situation which would seem to deny their meaning, we still do not doubt their authenticity or feel any sense of irony. Thus, when Achilles, deluded by Apollo, pursues the wraith-like shape of Agenor at the beginning of Book XXII of the Iliad, what could so easily be ridiculous is still heroic because, throughout the whole passage, Achilles is referred to by his recurrent epithet "Fleet of Foot". Even Apollo, in revealing his divinity to Achilles and upbraiding him for striving with a god, does not deny the swiftness of the pursuit but asks "Wherefore, son of Peleus, pursuest thou me with swift feet, thyself being mortal and I a deathless god?" The point of the moment, and its marvel, is not that a mortal should dare to pursue a god, but that, even when deluded, a mortal could actually keep pace with one.

Still more powerful, are those moments when the epithets are used to identify a character rather than affirm their powers. In Book XI of the Odyssey, the girl Tyro is walking along a shore when she encounters an unknown lover. As they make love, a dark wave arches over them like a coverlet, until at last he ends his deed and identifies himself thus:

> Lo, I am Poseidon, shaker of earth.
>
> (Odyssey. XI. 242-52)

C.S. Lewis' description of this moment cannot be improved upon, so I quote it in full here:

> Because we have had 'shaker of earth' time and again in these poems where no miracle was involved, because these syllables have come to affect us almost as the presence of the unchanging sea in the real world, we are compelled to accept this. Call it nonsense, if you will; we have seen it. The real salt sea itself, and not any pantomime or Ovidian personage living in the sea, has got a mortal woman with child. Scientists and theologians must explain it as best they can. The Fact is not disputable.[16]

Homer's topoi and epithets, introduced into his verse almost casually and often without warning, make possible a kind of wonder not to be found in any later epic. When Virgil or Milton wish to convince us of a miracle, they must prepare

us for it in advance, remove every possible explanation, and guard against any possible misinterpretation. Consequently, while they may work on a larger scale than Homer, and sing of deeds and marvels of great historical or universal significance, they are less able to persuade us of the magic of a single action or moment. Homer's marvels seem so believable because they seem uncontrived. We have no sense of a poet mediating between ourselves and the event, but feel ourselves to be confronted with the very things of which the poet wishes us to feel the wonder. It is true that Virgil and Milton both follow Homer in the use of epithets, but the way that these epithets are used in the Aeneid and Paradise Lost differs sharply from the Homeric usage. In Homer's epics, epithets usually describe an action. Thus, "swift-foot Pelides" informs us that Achilles is fleet-footed and athletic. "Gerenian horseman" tells us that Nestor is accomplished in the art of taming steeds; a skill that is appropriate to one who, in his counsel, is also adept at curbing the passions and taming the hearts of men. "Hector of the tossing plume", suggests the inspiration and vigour which make Hector so valuable to the Trojans, and the importance of his visible presence to their confidence and morale. (Achilles, by contrast, performs most of his valiant actions alone and unaided, and inspires as much fear among the Greeks as he does love or loyalty).

Each of these heroic epithets, and the others like them, serve to distinguish one hero or god from another; to isolate those features which constitute the particular virtues of this and no other personage and enable us to recognize him or her at any moment and respond accordingly.

The Virgilian and Miltonic epithets, on the other hand, do not identify their characters by describing the actions we would expect from them, but rather by defining their place in the universe with relation to other beings and the gods. Thus "pius Aeneas" tells us that Aeneas is beloved by the gods and marked by them as a man of outstanding virtue chosen for a high and noble destiny. Whereas the epithet in Homer serves to distinguish one character from another by indicating their unique characteristics, the Virgilian epithet serves to link its character to the other beings in the same universe by describing moral or social values rather than heroic ones. With Milton, the epithet assumes a still more complicated task, for it serves to locate its character in the universal scheme, not with reference to one point of observation only, but any one of several such points. Thus, the important things about a character, and which define that character's epithet, tend to change, depending upon the status of whoever the character is with. Thus, when she is with Adam, Eve is "Daughter of God and Man, accomplisht Eve" (IV. 660). In relation to her descendants,

however, she bears a still more splendid title, and one that is conferred upon her by the Son himself in these words:

> (thou) shalt bear
> Multitudes like thyself, and thence be call'd
> Mother of human Race.
>
> (IV. 473-5)

The only epithet in Paradise Lost which does not change is that of the Father, Who is consistently referred to as "Almighty". Thus Raphael and Adam, for all the differences between them in native splendour, are alike in this one respect--their humility before the "one Almighty" (V.469). Even Satan, who would deny the fact of God's omnipotence is powerless to change the name, but speaks, however reluctantly, of "Him Almighty styl'd". But of all the titles and epithets in Paradise Lost, the Father's is the only one which is not fluid and subject to change. Elsewhere identity is no longer taken for granted as a fixed entity as it had been in Homer. Selfhood in the Aeneid and Paradise Lost may be partly or wholly bestowed by God, but it is only discovered and maintained by the individual. Furthermore, it may be lost in these poems if a character's actions do not manifest the qualities he was made to display. Whereas in Homer, the value of man's actions is determined by his identity, in Virgil and Milton, the value of a man is determined by his

actions.

I have so far concentrated upon the advantages enjoyed by Homeric epic over that of Virgil or Milton, but if Homer's world view makes possible a greater degree of credibility and a more vividly intense poetic creation than can be found in "literary" epic, it is also limiting. The Iliad and Odyssey certainly do not run away from the problems of life, or simply pretend that they do not exist, (as do the romantic epics of Boiardo and Ariosto), but neither do they wrestle with those problems as do the epics of Virgil and Milton. Life and death, the nature and place of man in the universe, are all viewed as being self-explanatory. While the Iliad and Odyssey may display, more than any other poems, an awareness of the beauty and vitality of particular moments there is little or no awareness of time conceived as a continuum. Actions are at least as important for themselves as they are for any consequences they might bring about. Even the death of Hector, a death which deprives Troy of her greatest warrior and makes her destruction almost inevitable, is important not so much for its political as for its personal significance. Indeed Homer is not very interested in the Trojan war per se; what interests him is the personal drama of tragedy and revenge. In the Odyssey we do not feel that history would have been unalterably changed if Odysseus had not reached Ithaka; what is of importance is the personal struggle to

return and recover power. The "great subject", which some have seen as a defining characteristic of epic, may be superimposed upon Homer's poems, but it is not fundamental to them. It truly enters the tradition with Virgil. The first Six Books of the Aeneid follow the Odyssey in describing a hero's journey to his homeland. But whereas Odysseus' "nostos" is an individual's quest to relinquish adventure and discover peace, Aeneas' journey is to a home he has never seen before, and represents not an attempt to set adventure aside, but to embark upon the adventure of a whole civilization; an adventure which will outlast his own life. The final six Books of the Aeneid describe a war, but this war, far more than that in the Iliad, is a conflict of nations and ideologies. On the one side is Aeneas, the Trojans and their allies, carrying with them a great responsibility and the duty of fulfilling the will of the gods. On the other side is Turnus, the Rutulians and the Latins, good and noble men, but men who, by no fault of their own, find themselves excluded from the divine purpose and tragically manipulated into a position of opposition to it. Indeed, Turnus, in his jealous regard for personal glory is far closer to the Homeric conception of heroism than is Aeneas, who seeks the glory of a nation rather than that of an individual.

These differences between the world-views of Homer and the poets of "literary" epic both make for and reflect a very important difference of purpose. Whereas Virgil

and Milton both have theses to assert, Homer has none. His epics may nourish the consciousness of the reader or auditor to a degree unrivalled by any other poet, but they do nothing for his knowledge. Virgil and Milton, on the other hand, have a point to make, a truth to express, and it is as important as it is true. Every action in the Aeneid and Paradise Lost may be seen to carry a significance beyond its immediate setting. With these poems it is often possible, as it is not with the Iliad and Odyssey, to draw a distinction between meaning and event. Consider, for example, the moment when Aeneas first examines the shield fashioned for him by Vulcan. Like Achilles' beholding the armour made for him by Hephaestos, Aeneas' initial response is one of wonder:

> expleri nequit atque oculos per singula volvit,
> miraturque interque manus et bracchia versat.
>
> (VIII. 618-9)

> (His eye caressed each piece;
> in wonder he touched them, turned them, held them up)

The two shields themselves, however, are totally different in nature and significance. I shall look briefly at both, for the difference between them in large part reflects the difference between the epics conceived and executed by each poet. The shield of Achilles, unlike that of Aeneas, depicts a world which is compact and self-contained. The very shape of the shield embraces the whole Homeric

universe within it. At the beginning of his description, Homer states that it depicts the whole world:

> He made the earth upon it, and the sky, and
> the sea's water, and the tireless sun, and
> the moon waxing into her fullness, and on it
> all the constellations that festoon the heavens.
>
> (XVIII 483-5)

The conclusion of the description also focuses upon the totality and completeness of the representation:

> He made on it the great strength of the Ocean River
> which ran around the uttermost rim of the shield's
> strong structure.
>
> (XVIII 606-7)

Just as the river Ocean was believed to encircle the whole world, Hephaestus' representation of it encircles the shield, giving a unity and simplicity to everything contained within. Virgil's shield, on the other hand, like his understanding of the world has no such claim towards completeness and symmetry. He ends his description of Aeneas' shield not with a contemplation of the whole as a unit, but with a glimpse of long processions of conquered races and nations who march through time as an endless tribute to Roman martial valour:

> incedunt victae longo ordine gentes,
> quam variae linguis, habitu tam vestis et armis.
>
> (VIII 722-3)

(Long files of captive peoples passed,
in speech outlandish, as in dress and arms.)

Virgil never describes the shield as a unit, but presents one scene after another in a linear sequence reflecting chronological progression. First we see Romulus and Remus being suckled by the she-wolf, then the foundation of Rome and the rape of the Sabines. These scenes are followed by further glimpses of early Roman history: the war with the Curetes, the punishment of Mettus, torn apart by wild horses, Horatius breaking the bridge, the geese giving warning of the Gauls' approach and Cato giving judgement in the Underworld. The ocean, which in Homer's shield had encircled the whole, here appears in the very middle of the shield, and is not strictly the river Ocean at all but the Mediterranean Sea, for it plays host to the battle of Actium, another significant moment in Roman history. Typically, this battle-scene is full of historical figures: Antony, Cleopatra, Agrippa and Augustus himself. There follows the victory celebration in Rome, with crowded streets, slaughtered oxen, jubilant Romans and humble, conquered slaves. While many of these scenes are similar in certain visual respects to those described by Homer, their significance and poetic effect are very different. Firstly, none of the figures on Achilles' shield are named, for they are not intended to represent anybody in particular. Rather, the dancing youths and maidens, the marriages and

festivals, the cattle-raids, ambushes and market disputes, the ploughmen, reapers, vintners, lyrists, herdsmen and flocks whether grazing or perishing beneath the jaws of ravening lions, all contribute to the beauty of the shield as the poet's similes contribute to the beauty of his poem; they depict a world which is varied and yet consistent, grim yet beautiful, a world in which action and achievement are vital yet meaningless. The shield of Achilles encompasses all space and is limited to no one time, but within that self-contained unit, the only space of any importance is the place where one finds oneself, the only time of any moment, is the present. No two scenes in Achilles' shield relate to each other, but each is important in and for itself. The poet moves from one description to another in just the same way as Achilles' gaze focusses now one one scene, now on the next. There is no hint of sequence or causation in the pattern, but each verbal description is linked to the next by anaphora:

> He made the earth upon it, and the sky...(483)
> On it he wrought in all their beauty
> two cities...(490)
> He made upon it a soft field, the pride
> of tilled land, (541)
> He made upon it the precinct of a king, (550)
> He made upon it a great vineyard heavy
> with clusters, (561)

He made upon it a herd of horn-straight oxen. (573)
And the renowned smith of the strong arms made
elaborate on it a dancing floor, (590-1)
He made on it the great strength of the
Ocean River (606)

Virgil's description, on the other hand, progresses hypotactically rather than paratactically. The scenes do not simply co-exist in a narrow space, but each flows from the one before to depict the unfolding history of Rome. The descriptions are linked together by conjunctions which cause the various scenes to complement or contrast with each other. Thus, after the picture of the conquered Egyptians seeking refuge in the Nile, that of Caesar's victory procession is introduced by the conjunction "at":

contra autem magno maerentem corpore Nilum
pandentemque sinus et tota veste vocantem
caervleum in gremium latebrosaque flumina victos.
at Caesar, triplici invectus Romana triumpho
moenia, dis Italis votum immortale sacrabat.
(VIII 711-5)

(And there, to the south, the Nile, grief-striken,
great, offering haven, waving the conquered home
in hiding spots in his blue creeks and bays.
But Caesar, riding through Rome in triple triumph,
promised immortal gifts to Italy's gods.)

Both shields are objects of wonder, but whereas the marvel

of Achilles' shield is the shield itself; its intricacy and strength, its beauty and craftmanship, the wonder we feel at Aeneas' shield goes beyond its appearance to include its significance. In the course of Virgil's description we almost forget that what we are beholding is a shield at all; it is as if we were looking through prophetic eyes directly into the future. Homer, on the other hand, maintains throughout the whole account of Achilles' surveillance of his armour, a delight in and amazement at the miracle of making. The technical skills of smithying which, in Virgil's time, were far more developed than in Homer's command less power over the Roman poet's imagination than they do over the Greek's. But if Homer's description is simpler and less portentous than Virgil's, it is also purer, for it causes us to marvel at things we might otherwise take for granted.

Aeneas himself, very significantly, does not marvel at his shield in the way Virgil's reader or auditor does. His own response to the beauty of the craftmanship is like that of Achilles--simple wonder at a magnificient piece of smithying. This makes for a very powerful dramatic irony in Virgil's passage, for the reader or auditor of the poem is aware of the significance of the scenes portrayed in a way Aeneas himself, notwithstanding his visions in the Underworld, is not:

> miratur rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet,
> altolens umero famamque et fata nepotum.
>
> (VIII. 729-31)

(Aeneas
saw only art, not history, and in joy
shouldered the fame and fortune of his sons.)

Aeneas' ignorance at this point creates the sense of protecting deity and controlling Providence. But while his immediate purpose may harmonize with that of the gods and facilitate its fulfilment, it is nevertheless distinct. This is true of the whole of the Aeneid. The action of the poem does not coincide with its meaning or thesis, even though it does suggest and assert that meaning or thesis. No such distinction can be made with regard to Homer's epics. Homer has no intention of instructing anybody or revealing anything; his delight is to discover the beauty and meaning inside things and actions as they are, rather than to relate those things and actions to any higher beauty or meaning.

How, then, does Milton relate to all this? It has never been doubted that Milton, like Virgil, has a thesis to assert, but just what that thesis is, and how it relates to the action of Paradise Lost has been much more of a matter for debate. It seems strange that this should be so, for no other poet has stated more explicitly his didactic intention than has Milton in the exordium to the poem:

what in me is dark
Illumin, what is low raise and support;
That to the highth of this great Argument
I may assert Eternal Providence
And justifie the wayes of God to man. (I. 22-6)

Since the time of Addison and Johnson it has never been questioned that by "justifie" Milton means "vindicate" and that in justifying God's ways to men, Milton intends to exculpate God from any responsibility for the Fall of Man. Johnson thus wrote that Milton's didactic purpose is

> to vindicate the ways of God to Man; to show the reasonableness of religion and the necessity of obedience to the Divine Law.[17]

In addition to its apparent justification by the above quoted lines from the exordium, this understanding of Milton's didactic purpose also owes much to the critical theories of Le Bossu. According to Le Bossu, the epic poem works by asserting a moral which is made evident in the action of the poem.[18] Thus Paradise Lost, which describes the Fall of Man, asserts a moral of obedience: when men are obedient to the divine will they are happy, when they disobey they are miserable. More recently, however, this understanding of Milton's didactic purpose has been challenged. In his timely critical work, The Thesis of Paradise Lost, G.A. Wilnes argues that "the intent of Paradise Lost is to assert eternal providence, to show how it operates to bring forth good from evil." Denying that Paradise Lost is "a treatment of the Fall of man, aiming to show that obedience to God is the highest of all virtues," Wilnes argues that it is a "treatment of the operation of Providence, traced through the celestial cycle from the revolt of the angels to the Last Judgement." For

Wilkes, the "great Arguement" or subject of the poem

> is manifestly the 'celestial cycle' embracing the revolt of the angels and the war in heaven, the narrative of the creation of the world, the temptation and fall of man, the sweep of human history to the flood, and from the flood to the birth of Christ.[19]

Thus on the one hand there stands the school of critics who discern in Paradise Lost a moral of obedience extracted from the fable of the Fall of man, while on the other there is Wilkes, who seems to replace this understanding of Milton's subject and purpose with the pattern of the celestial cycle. In addition to their disagreement as to Milton's didactic purpose, these two readings of the poem also disagree as to the relation between its action or fable and its thesis. The traditional school understands the poem's action (the Fall of Man) to suggest its thesis (the necessity of obedience to God) in just the same way as the meaning of the Aeneid (the glory of Rome) is suggested by that poem's action (Aeneas' journeys, wars and founding of a settlement in Italy). Wilkes, however, writes as if there were no distinction between action and thesis in Paradise Lost. For him, the poem's action is its thesis. It begins with the creation of the angels and concludes with the Last Judgement. Throughout his study, Wilnes refers to this cycle as the "subject" or "argument" of Paradise Lost and speaks as if

it has only to be recognized for the full significance of the poem to become clear. However, this understanding directly contradicts Milton's identification of the "whole subject" of Paradise Lost in the prose Argument to Book I, as "Man's disobedience and the loss thereupon of Paradise." J.M. Steadman in his Epic and Tragic Structure in Paradise Lost justly takes Wilkes to task for his misuse of the word "subject":

> Only the temptation and Fall of man receives central emphasis in the fable--for this alone is the 'subject' of the poem, as Milton employs the term. In the sense that Wilkes often gives this term it means everything--and consequently nothing.[20]

Steadman also corrects both sides in the debate by clarifying the meaning of the phrase "great Argument". His correction is so valuable that I quote it in full here:

> (A) critical battle has been waged over the 'subject' or 'thesis' of Paradise Lost. The contestants have, on the whole, tended to blur the distinction between the poetic and logical senses of "argument" and assume all too readily that Milton's "great Argument"--the "argument of the Poem"--is none other than the vindication of "Eternal Providence" and the justification of God's ways to men.

> Actually his argument is the subject announced in his proposition or (in a somewhat narrower sense) the events summarized at the beginning of each book. Both of these senses are conventional, and in this context they are strictly literary rather than logical or rhetorical. Milton's argument is the Fall of man, just as Virgil's argument (according to several Italian critics) is Aeneas' arrival in Italy and just as Homer's arguments are Achilles' wrath and Odysseus' nostos or homecoming.[21]

The "great Argument" of Paradise Lost is not its thesis but its fable; not a moral which Milton is arguing but an action he is imitating. That action is not the celestial cycle but the Fall of man. The creation and rebellion of the angels, the war in Heaven, the Creation of the World, the Incarnation of Christ and the Last Judgement may all be glimpsed, narrated or prophesied in the course of the poem, but its central action, its "great Argument" is the Temptation and Fall. The poem does not, as Wilkes supposes, lump its direct and related or prophesied action together and present the whole to the reader or auditor to do with as he will, rather it makes subtle use of the interplay of direct and related action to assert that, in spite of the Fall, man may still be saved through the Providence of God.

The essential relationship between the direct action of the Fall and the revealed thesis of eternal providence is one of collision. This marks a fundamental difference between Paradise Lost and the Aeneid. The thesis of Virgil's poem is continuously asserted and suggested by its action. The former grows out of the latter easily and incontestibly and, as in the episode of the shield, counterpoints and complements it to the enrichment of the whole poem. The offering of providential grace to man, however, far from being the natural and expected result of the Fall, would seem, by all normal conceptions of justice, to be utterly denied by it. That fallen man should indeed be offered Grace, therefore, is cause for surprise and wonder of a degree not to be found in the Aeneid. Just as Virgil had developed the epic beyond the Homeric pattern by distinguishing thesis from action, Milton went further still by bringing thesis and action into direct collision with each other. But in another sense, Milton's development of Virgil also reclaims some of the Homeric effects which Virgil had forfeited. As we have seen in Homer's references to the "life-giving earth", one of his greatest powers is his ability to open our eyes in revealing the beauty of humble things. Milton, especially in his description of Creation in Books IV and VII of Paradise Lost, also succeeds in making us look at familiar things in a fresh and invigorating way. I shall examine this skill in much greater detail in my next chapter, but in the meantime, it is necessary to defend my understanding of the relationship

between Milton's thesis and "argument" against certain possible criticisms which might be brought against it.

Foremost among these would be the contention that Milton's avowed purpose to "justify the ways of God to man" is indisputable evidence that his didactic intention is to exculpate God from any responsibility for the Fall and demonstrate that man deserved what he got. Those critics who see Paradise Lost as being designed for the purpose of stressing "the necessity of obedience to the Divine Law", could say that whilst Milton does "assert Eternal Providence", his major purpose is to "justify the ways of God to men", and thus the collision I am arguing for between action and thesis, if it exists at all, is of only secondary importance. The true meaning of the poem, its essential moral, is that of obedience to God and it is suggested by the Fall; while the revelation of divine Grace may come as a pleasant surprise, it does nothing to remove or transcend that meaning. I would certainly agree with these critics that the exculpation of God is part of Milton's task. Adam's soliloquy in Book X, when he acknowledges his own guilt and God's guiltlessness, is conclusive proof that Milton was at least partly concerned with this issue:

> Him after all disputes
> Forced I absolve; all my evasions vain
> And reasonings, though through mazes, lead me still
> But to my own conviction.
>
> (X. 828-31)

But whereas they see the exculpation of God as the major and final purpose of Paradise Lost, I see it as only a part, and not the most important part, of the poem's thesis. The danger of placing too much emphasis upon the exculpation of God and not enough upon the assertion of Eternal Providence is that such a reading ignores or underestimates the collison between thesis and argument from which so much of the power of Paradise Lost springs. The argument of the poem, the Fall of Man, is established as a challenge "to the highth" of which its thesis must soar in order to reveal how even the most lamentable of tragedies is accomodated within a divine Providential pattern. This accomodation of evil is the central marvel of Paradise Lost and the poem's prime source of wonder. To ignore or underestimate it is to ignore or underestimate the very thing which makes the poem an epic and relates it to the epics of Homer and Virgil. "But if this collison between argument and thesis is so important," some critics might say, "how was it ever overlooked in the first place? How was it that Addison and Johnson, and countless other scholars came to see the poem as a denial of God's responsibility for man's suffering an assertion of the moral of obedience, when, in fact, (you would have us believe) Milton was all the time trying to tell us something else?" The reason for these critics' misunderstanding, I believe, is something very simple and yet of enormous consequence. I have already quoted Steadman to

show how a slight misunderstanding of the word "argument" can completely change our interpretation of the exordium. What has caused every critic since Addison to misunderstand Milton's statement of purpose in the exordium to Paradise Lost, I believe, is a change of meaning in another, still more important word in those initial 26 lines: the word "justifie". Johnson's understanding of the word is apparent in the "synonym" with which he replaces it when he writes that Milton's intention is "to vindicate the ways of God to men". But did Milton himself simply mean "vindicate" when he used "justifie"? It is my belief that he did not, and that he word "justifie" had, in the seventeenth century, a fuller meaning and a tone very different from that it had assumed even by Johnson's lifetime. I shall argue that, for Milton, "justifie" had a meaning much closer to the modern "reveal" than "justify" or "vindicate", and, consequently, his didactic purpose in Paradise Lost is very different from that imagined by many critics. His task is revelationary rather than exculpatory and thus employs the epic marvellous to a degree and in a fashion quite unprecedented by previous epic and not fully recognized or appreciated even to this day.

Ordinarily, when the calling the meaning of words into question, the Oxford English Dictionary serves as a universally recognized arbiter. When studying seventeenth century literature, however, the principles from which even the finest modern dictionaries work can be limiting or even

irrelevant. The problem is that the ideas and beliefs held about language today are very different from those held in Milton's time, and consequently a twentieth century dictionary has a function very different from that of one compiled in the seventeenth century. The purpose of a modern dictionary is to define words by separating them from each other and distinguishing even the different meanings of a single word. By using a tool such as the O.E.D. we may choose the word appropriate for any situation and recognize the particular application of a given word at any one instance. In the seventeenth century, however, language was looked upon as a unified organism rather than a collection of multiple words of different meaning. In part this attitude is explained by religion. It was believed that when Adam had given names to every object in the Garden of Eden, he had given them their correct names. These names were not arbitrary lables, but were true, eternal realities which had been revealed to Adam with the beginning of language itself. Although the original, pure language had been broken and fractured with the scattering of the peoples and tongues following the building of the Tower of Babel, some similarities and kinships could still be discerned between the different languages of the world and these similarities and kinships were echoes and reminders of the original language spoken by Adam. We would now explain the similarities between different languages by the science of philology, but in Milton's time these similarities were looked upon with a certain amount of

awe as relics of Man's prelapsarian existence. This explains Milton's wide use of and respect for puns; especially puns between English and an ancient and authoritative language such as Latin. By using an English word with its Latin meaning, Milton felt he was revivifying his own language by drawing it one step closer to the original and perfect language. The importance of this attitude to language for my immediate purpose in redefining "justifie", is that it warns us against referring to the O.E.D. as an absolute authority. The O.E.D. itself cites Milton's use of "justifie" in the exordium to Paradise Lost unders it's sixth entry for that word, and define it thus:

> To show or maintain the justice or reasonableness of (an action, claim, etc); to adduce adequate grounds for; to defend as right and proper.
>
> (O.E.D. 6)

However, the third entry for "justify" in the O.E.D. is at least as pertinent to Milton's use of the word as is the definition given above, and provides no less satisfactory a fulfilment of Johnson's understanding of the exordium:

> To show (a person or action) to be just or in the right; to prove or maintain the righteousness or innocence of, to vindicate (from a charge)
>
> (O.E.D. 3)

These two definitions are quite similar and both are easily

embraced by Milton's "justifie". However, there are other entries for "justify" in the O.E.D. which, whilst they may not lend themselves to the use of the word in the exordium quite so obviously, are nevertheless still more enlightening. Many of these uses of the word are obsolete today, but they were not so in Milton's time and the influence they would have exerted upon "justifie" in the exordium should not be underestimated. First of all, "justify" can mean "to corrobrate, prove" or "verify" (O.E.D. 5). The O.E.D. cites in this section an example of "justify" dating from 1680 which runs as follows:

> For who can justify, that Nature-there is ty'd to the same Laws, she acts by here?

In this sentence, "justify" is far closer to "prove" than it is to "vindicate"; a use of the word we would not encounter today. Yet this sentence was written after the publication of Paradise Lost, so clearly "justify" still had this significance in 1667. "Justify" could also mean "to maintain as true", "to affirm" or "aver" (O.E.D. 5b). This meaning is also now obsolete, but the O.E.D. quotes an example from 1658:

> An Inquisition.....which a Cursitor did about that time justifie he had inrolled.

Once again, "vindicate" would be an entirely appropriate synonym for "justify" in this context. Further, "justify" can mean "to acknowledge as true or genuine" (O.E.D. 5c).

Chapman, in his translation of the Iliad published in 1611, uses "justify" in just this way:

> The great God had a son,/Whom he himself yet justifies.

This use of the word is close to the theological meaning of "justify":

> To absolve, acquit, exculpate; to declare free from the penalty of sin on the ground of Christ's righteousness, or to make inherently righteous by infusion of grace.
>
> (O.E.D. 4)

We are all familiar with the term "justification by faith" and would never confuse that meaning of the word with "vindication". When a soul is justified it is made pure and its sins are washed away. Certainly, "justified" in this sense does not mean that adequate grounds are adduced for that soul's having sinned. Another, possibly related use of "justify" is the technical sense meaning of justify bail:

> to show, by the oath of a person furnishing bail or other surety, that after the payment of his debts he is of adequate pecuniary ability.
>
> (O.E.D. 7b)

Here, "justify" refers to a kind of ransoming. The theological use of "justify" also describes a kind of ransoming, for the righteous can only be justified through the ransom of Jesus Christ. Milton uses "justify: in a theological context many times throughout his prose works, and the word also appears

with this meaning in Paradise Lost:

> Some blood more precious must be paid for man,
> Just for unjust that in such righteousness
> To them by Faith imputed, they may finde
> Justification towards God.
>
> (XII. 293-6)

Here, Milton's word "justification" contains at least three of the separate meanings listed for "justify" in the O.E.D. First of all, it refers to the "infusion of grace" (O.E.D. 4); secondly, in the imagery of payment, it refers to the paying of someone's debts by a benign third party (O.E.D. 7b); and finally, in its proximity to the words "Just for unjust", it suggests that man is to partake of the justice of God in being justified (O.E.D. 8). The word also looks back to "justifie" in the exordium and fulfils Milton's promise to justify the ways of God to men by revealing that men themselves may ultimately be justified before God. There is one other entry for "justify" in the O.E.D. which may shed some light on Milton's use of the word in the exordium, and that is the sense

> To make exact; to fit or arrange exactly;
> to adjust to exact shape or position.
>
> (O.E.D. 9)

At the present time this use of "justify" is entirely technical and usually describes the practice of printers in adjusting types of smaller and larger size so as to

form a correct matrix. In earlier times, however, it could be applied to any act of correcting and adjusting. The O.E.D. quotes and example describing the adjusting of a globe which dates from 1551:

> By true woorkinge to justifie your Globe, whiche fyrste maye bee made as rounde, as any Turner can doo it, and then shall your instrument... correct it exactlye if it be amysse.

In Paradise Lost the globe which is to be "justified" is the earth itself, when, on the day of the Last Judgement, "the Earth/shall all be Paradise, far happier place/Than this of Eden, and far happier days." (XII 463-5). In book VII, the Son begins Creation by measuring the size of the universe in chaos and proclaiming "This be thy just Circumference, O World" (VII 231). My point about "justifie" in the exordium to Paradise Lost is that no one of the definitions given the word in the O.E.D. is sufficient to embrace its full spectrum of action. Milton's intention is to show the justice of God's ways, but he is to do so by revealing what those ways are. Thus his justification is as much an act of verification, affirmation and clarification as it is of vindication and exculpation, for many of the significances of "justify" which have faded from modern usage are still operative in the exordium of Paradise Lost. The problem with Johnson's limiting "justifie" to "vindicate" is that such an understanding creates the expectation that Milton's

purpose is to justify the Fall to man. But as the plural "wayes" should warn us, there are several aspects of God's nature and actions which the poet intends to unfold before us. We are to see His anger, His Creative power and finally, and most importantly, His Providential Grace which embraces all the rest. Furthermore, the nature of Milton's justification, unlike that of a vindicator or counsel for the defence, is to proceed less by argument and reasoning than by discovery. The justice of Milton's God is similar to Sophocles' concept of "dikē"; it is not malleable or subject to negotiation, but is what it is whether men like it or not. It may be revealed to men, but it cannot be changed by them. It differs from Sophocles' "dikē", however, in that it can always be understood, and it is always good.

I have so far argued that the O.E.D. is an insufficient tool for illuminating Milton's understanding of "justifie", for it fractures the word into several splinters and scatters its manifold action into particular and isolated channels whereas in the seventeenth century words were valued for their power to draw different meanings together. If the O.E.D. is a dangerous tool, is there, perhaps, an alternative? A dictionary compiled in Milton's own time? We are fortunate in the extreme, for not only is there just such a dictionary in existence, but its compiler is none other than Milton's own nephew, biographer and childhood pupil, Edward Phillips. Phillips' dictionary <u>The New World of Words</u> displays all of

the principles and beliefs relating to language that I have argued above were characteristic of the seventeenth century. The very title reflects these principles, for like a "world", Phillips' dictionary is an entity compared to inter-related parts. It stresses the kinships rather than the differences between words. Indeed it is as much of a thesaurus as it is a dictionary, and Phillips shows no awareness of the difference between these two tools. However, Phillips stands very much at the end of a tradition. His dictionary is perhaps the last published work to display the principles of language I have outlined, for it appeared on the threshold of the Enlightenment, when those principles were finally discarded and replaced with the modern view of language as a constantly evolving human activity rather than a gift bestowed on man by God and subject to degeneration since the Fall. Hence forward, dictionaries were to be looked upon as tools with which to pin words down to particular meanings rather than avenues through which their relations to other words might be seen. Phillips himself was to suffer from this change in attitude. In the eighteenth century was published a savage criticism of Phillips' dictionary entitled A World of Errors in A World of Words. Accuracy had replaced richness of expression as the organizing principle upon which a dictionary was compiled. But for all its shortcomings when judged by modern principles, The New World of Words is invaluable as an insight into Milton's understanding of language in general and "justifie"

in particular. Phillips has no entry for "justifie", but he defines "justification" as follows:

> a clearing, justifying or making good.[22]

Let us first look at "clearing". While it could be interpreted as "show to be clear of guilt", this meaning is contained within the larger sense of "justification" as "clarification". Before we can engage in any argument as to the justice or injustice of an act, we must be clear as to what the act is. In the O.E.D., this action of "justify" has become limited to "Prove" (O.E.D. 5a) "affirm" or "aver" (O.E.D. 5b), but Phillips' definition is actually more accurate than is that of the O.E.D. for it encompasses more of the word's complex action than does any of the O.E.D.'s definitions. If we understand Milton's justification of God's ways to men as clarification of those ways, his didactic purpose can be seen to include exculpation, vindication, affirmation and revelation simultaneously. But Phillips also defines "justification" as "a making good". By this, we could understand him to mean that an act of justification is a revelation of the good in something. This would certainly harmonize with "clearing", but "making good" suggests efficacious performance as well as clarification of vision, and so includes the theological meaning defined in the O.E.D. as the infusion of Grace in Man by God thus making him inherently righteous. It also includes the two technical meanings of "justify" regarding the showing of someone to be of adequate pecuniary ability after the payment of a debt, and the adjusting of something to exact size, shape or position. Thus Phillips,

in just the two definitions "clearing" and "making good", includes all of the actions of "justify" I have cited from the O.E.D. and maintains an awareness that several of those different actions may be present in one word at a time. But although my broader understanding of "justifie" may be borne out by Phillips' dictionary, it has still to be shown that the actual instances of the word in Cl7th English could and often did employ more than one of the meanings I have given at any one time, and further, that the word could and often did include the sense "reveal". I shall look first at "justify" as it is used in Shakespeare.

Shakespeare uses "justify" on ten occasions. Of these, only four could be replaced with "vindicate" without any serious loss of meaning. I give one example from Measure For Measure:

> To justify this worthy nobleman;
> So vulgarly and personnaly accus'd,
> Her shall you hear disprov'd to her eyes.
>
> (V.i. 159-62)

For the other six instances of "justify" in Shakespeare, however,"vindicate" would be quite an inappropriate synonym. I shall quote all six examples so that it may be clear that the word has indeed narrowed in meaning since the seventeenth century. The first example is from The Two Noble Kinsmen:

> Sir/I have seen you move in such a place which well
> Might justify your manhood; you were call'd
> A good knight and a bold.
>
> (III. i. 62-5)

This "justify" would be placed in section 5a of the O.E.D.'s entry for the word, under the definition "to verify" or "prove", but Phillips' "make clear" or "make good" would serve just as well, as would my own "reveal". Shakespeare's next "justify" comes from Henry VIII:

> Let be call'd before us
> That gentleman of Buckingham's; in person
> I'll hear him his confessions justify,
> And point by point the treasons of his master
> He shall again relate.
>
> (I. ii. 6)

This "justify" would be placed in section 5b of the O.E.D., under the definition "to maintain as true" or "affirm", but Phillips' "make good" would do just as well and has the further advantage of suggesting the burden of proof which lies upon the confessor. In Cymbeline Iachimo endeavours to convince a doubtful Posthumous that he had slept with Imoyen by describing her bedchamber. When Posthumous protests that he might have heard the chamber described by others, Iachimo replies:

> More particulars/Must justify my knowledge.
>
> (II. iv. 76-9)

This "justify" might be placed either in section 5a ("to prove" or"verify") or 5b ("to maintain as true, affirm") or even 5c ("to acknowledge as true or genuine"). Phillips' "clear" (or "clarify") and "make good", however, encompasses

all of the meanings present in Shakespeare's word, and, if we take "make good" in the sense of efficacious performance, may even alert us to a possible pun rich in dramatic irony. For Jachimo's "knowledge", for all his confidence in it, does indeed need to be "made good" for he is unaware that the woman he has in fact slept with is not Imogen. In terms of the O.E.D., his opinion must be "Fitted or arranged exactly" (O.E.D. 9) in order for his error to be revealed. My fourth and fifth examples of Shakespearean use of "justify" both come from Pericles. The first of the two occurs at the conclusion of the Prologue when the chorus ushers in the action of the play with these words:

> What now ensues, to the judgement of your eye
> I give my cause, who best can justify.
>
> (I. ch. 42)

Here the revelationary significance of "justify" applies to the play itself which is about to unfold before our eyes. The fifth instance of "justify" in Shakespeare occurs in Act V of Pericles when Pericles reveals to Helicanus the miraculous truth that Marina is not dead:

> she shall tell thee all,
> When thou shalt kneel, and justify in knowledge
> She is thy very princess.
>
> (V.i.)

Here, "justify in knowledge" means "assure yourself completely". The identity of Marina is to be clearly revealed and established

before Helicanus. In each of the above examples, "justify" is far more forceful and powerful than in modern English. Its tone does not suggest the adducing of adequate grounds for a fault or error, but rather denies that any fault or error truly exist. In the example from Cymbeline (if my discernment of dramatic irony not be deemed too ingenious) this very forcefulness of the word is turned by the dramatic context back upon the speaker to heighten our sense of his error. Nowhere, however, is the significance of "justify" as "clarify" or "reveal" more clear than in this example from The Tempest. Prospero is speaking aside to Sebastian and Antonio:

> were I so minded/I here could pluck his highness' frown upon you, And justify you traitors.
>
> (V.i. 128)

The last thing that Prospero intends at this moment is to excuse the treachery of the two villains. Any understanding of "justify" as "vindicate" would thus be quite inappropriate. Rather, Prospero's words constitute an open threat, that if he so desired he could unmask Sebastian and Antonio as the traitors they really are and reveal them to the Duke in their true but hidden colours. Of all the examples of "justify" I have so far looked at, in tone and meaning, this seems to me to be the closest to Milton's use of the word in the exordium to Paradise Lost. His avowed thesis and professed purpose is not the assertion of a moral of

obedience as almost all critics since Addison have supposed, but the miraculous revelation to men of the Providence of God.

This is of enormous importance to the marvellous in Paradise Lost, for as a poem of revelation as much as or more than a poem of rhetorical disputation, it embraces the marvellous within its thesis and does not employ it as a mere decoration of its action. The collison between the thesis and the "argument" of the poem, (the Fall of Man) makes for a kind of wonder in Paradise Lost we do not find in the Aeneid or any other epic poem. It is characteristic of "literary" epic to depict actions that are true and actions that are marvellous. Tasso, in the Discorsi del Poema Eroico demanded that both are necessary for a true epic:

> Diversissime sono, queste due nature, il maraviglioso e 'l verisimile, e in guisa diverse che sono quasi contrarie fra loro: nondimeno l'una e l'altra nel puema e necessaria. (lib.11)
> (The verisimilar and the marvellous are very different in nature, different almost to the point of being antithetical; yet both are necessary in a poem.)

But never until Milton had it been thought possible for an epic poem to portray the true and marvellous in one action. Hitherto, the epic poet had had to balance verisimilitude with "maraviglia" as potentially rival or incompatible elements of poetry. The great skill of the epic poet was

to include both without weakening either. In his exordium to the Gerusalemme Liberata, Tasso concedes that the marvellous elements of his poem are fictitious and feels the need to apologize to his Muse for them:

> Tu rischiara il mio canto, e tu perdona
> S'intesso fregi al ver, se adorno in parte
> D'altri diletti, che de' tuoi, le carte. (1.2.6-8)
> (My verse ennoble, and forgive the thing
> If fictions light I mix with truth divine,
> And fill there lines with other praise than those).[22]
> (Fairfax)

Even Virgil, in many respects so like Milton, tends usually to keep the marvellous elements of the Aeneid separate from its historical significance. Thus when Aeneas descends into the Underworld, his wonder is reserved for the golden bough (VI. 204), the monsters by Hell's gate (VI. 283-95), the throng of souls awaiting transportation across the Styx (VI. 305-20), Cerberus (VI. 417) and the steel-towered prison house of the damned (VI. 550-60). When he sees Charon accepting some spirits and driving others back, he is "moved with wonder" at the sight:

> Aeneas miratus enim motusque tumultu (VI. 317)

But when Aeneas beholds his own descendants, the marvellous yields to history and the hero's wonder is replaced with a high sense of duty and keen attentiveness as he learns of his destiny. His vision of the future, unlike that of Adam in Book XII of Paradise Lost, is not punctuated with outbursts

of joy and amazement at the gifts bestowed upon him and his descendants, but he maintains throughout a stoic detachment and a sense of worldly duty which do not permit "maraviglia" to be present. The separation of versimilitude and "maraviglia" in Virgil and Tasso can partly be explained by their desire to dissociate their poems from the romantic epics which preceded them. Virgil may have taken delight in The Argonautica of Apollonius of Rhodes, but he is unwilling to allow the ficitious elements of that kind of poetry to approach the serious, historical parts of his own. Whenever the destiny of Rome is glimpsed or prophesied in the Aeneid, the marvellous is temporarily checked or set to one side. Tasso is similarly determined to rise above the fancies of Boiardo and Ariosto and depict an action which is more serious and true to life. While he is eager to employ the marvellous as a means of delighting his readers, he sees it as a quite inappropriate vehicle for their instruction. Milton shares Tasso's scorn of Ariosto's levity, and speaks with disdain of the "long and tedious havoc" with which the romantic poets wrote of "fabl'd knights/In Battles feign'd" (IX, 28-31). But Milton, instead of separating the truth of his subject from its marvellousness, asserts that his poem is not less, but more wonderful than those of its romantic predecessors. Unlike Virgil and Tasso, he does not abandon "maraviglia" to the romantics and turn instead to versimilitude; rather he claims the wonderful as the rightful property of the true, the serious, and the divine. This attitude is made

apparent from the opening lines of his poem, for when Milton boasts that he is to sing of

Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime (I. 16)

he is directly alluding to the exordium of Ariosto's Orlando Furioso. There, Ariosto had claimed

Diro d'Orlando in un medesmo tralto
Cusa non delta in prosa moi, ne in rima,
(1,2,1-2)

In the same strain of Roland will I tell
What never yet was said in prose or rhyme.

Ariosto's "boast" is a confession that what is to follow has no authority outside of his own imagination, but Milton's claim to originality turns Ariosto's words against him, for he proclaims that what is to follow is as important as it is true, and is more worthy of wonder than anything which the imaginations of the poets of romantic epic can ever conceive. This fusion of verisimilitude and"Maraviglia" in Paradise Lost gives Milton's epic a world-view and understanding of reality very different from those to be found in the Aeneid or the Gerusalenine Liberata. Because the marvellous in these poems is never given the dignity of truth it often has the appearance of being a literary artifice. It seems superimposed upon the world in which it appears, whereas in Paradise Lost it seems to be part of the world itself. There are, admittedly, some moments where Milton's vision falters. But these moments, like the description of the Paradise of Fools in Book II, are the result of the poet's

intruding his own prejudices and beliefs upon the integrity of his world vision and do not reflect any tensions or inconsistencies in that world vision itself. Milton's incorporation of the marvellous within the whole of his poem, thesis as well as action, also makes possible subtle variations between the kind of marvels depicted. At the bottom of the scale there are the false marvels of the fallen angels; actions which are not truly miraculous but seem so due to the beholder's ignorance of their cause. Greater than these are the marvels of action and achievement performed by the angels when warring in Heaven or flying great distances or raising monuments in Hell. More wonderful still is the miracle of Creation, in which the angels have a part as spectators and singers, but which is truly the performance of the Son. But greatest of all, and most important to the thesis of the poem, is the miracle of God's Providence. There is nothing like this range of different kinds of marvel in any other epic poem. In the Gerusalenine Liberata there is no essential difference between the marvels performed by the devils and those performed by the angels, and there is nothing to correspond with the higher marvels of Creation and God's Providence. In Paradise Lost, however, Milton is able to regulate our response to different kinds of marvels by bringing them into contrast or comparison with each other. We have seen how the falseness of the Satanic false marvels is indicated by their contrast with the authenticity of God's miracles. In the next chapter

I shall look at the presentation of Creation in Paradise Lost in order to show how Milton employs the correspondences between it and divine Providence in such a way that, even as he presents the latter as a conscious surprise, it also fulfils a subconscious expectation.

CHAPTER TWO: THE MIRACLE OF CREATION

Milton presents the miracle of Creation in two main ways; firstly through his description of Eden, centred upon Book IV, and secondly through his account of God's Creation of the universe in six days, contained in Book VII. Both Books IV and VII evoke wonder in the reader and the poem's characters, but they do so in different ways. The difference lies in the way time is treated in the two books. In book VII, Creation is an action, whereas in book IV we see Eden, already created, reflecting God's Providence in its ever-changing countenances.

For Milton, the action of Creation consists of the imposing of order and form--specifically the Platonic Forms --upon the raw material of Chaos. The universe does not appear out of nothing but is fashioned by the moulding and wresting of Chaos into a pattern pre-ordained by God. Despite the difficulties posed by such a belief, Milton is neither dualist or materialist. The Chaotic raw material of Creation is not evil, for that would impute evil to the finished product. All matter, Milton believed, came ultimately from God and therefore is good. But until matter, through the agency of the Son, is moulded by God into a reflection of His "great idea" (VII 557) it is only a potential medium for the expression of His goodness. This operation of God's Creative Power upon an object rather than upon nothing, helps to explain

why Milton's account of Creation is perhaps the most dynamic ever written. Form irrupts into matter, shaping it into ever higher and nobler patterns, and expanding into multitudinous variety whilst preserving harmony between Creation's diverse parts. Milton's language throughout book VII insists upon the immediacy of the obedience of matter to the Son's commands. Each object or creature appears swiftly and fully formed and emerges from its womb of darkness or earth as if released from prison. The sequence of Creation follows that of Genesis, but Milton still manages to incorporate some surprises, as I shall shortly demonstrate when I examine Book VII in closer detail. First of all, however, I shall look at book IV.

I. If Not Preferred More Justly

In his description of Eden in book IV, Milton is far less insistent upon the immediacy of time than he is in narrating, through Raphael, the Creation of the universe in six days. The account of Creation in book VII is more obviously a focus for the marvellous than is the pastoral description of Eden, for, as a description of an action it allows more room for the presentation of change, so essential to the evocation of wonder. However, Milton has described Eden in such a way that it is at least as awe-inspiring as the Creation of the universe, if not more so. Although his Eden does not inspire wonder through action, Milton awakens us to the existence and beauty of familiar things such as

trees, springs, birdsong and fresh air so that we look on them (as Satan does) as things not seen before. Book IV is not merely a pastoral interlude in the epic but is incorporated into the total scheme as a source of wonderment. Milton's description of Eden directly harmonizes with St. Augustine's teaching (set forth in the De Civitate Dei) that the world itself is more splendid a miracle than are the marvels which transpire within it:

> Quidquid igitur mirabile fit in hoc mundo profecto minus est quam totus hic mundus, id est caelum et terra et omnia quae in eis sunt, quae certe Deus fecit. (Now any marvellous thing that is wrought in this universe is assuredly less than this whole universe, that is heaven and earth and all things that in them are, which God assuredly created.)[1]

The superiority of the miracle of Eden to the marvels which take place within its bounds is of particular interest since those marvels are performed by Satan. His shape-shifting contrasts with the genuine changes of countenance to be witnessed in Eden. It is sometimes said that in first showing Eden to the reader through the eyes of its destroyer, Milton has cast the shadow of tragedy over Paradise from its first appearance in the poem. There is some truth to this, but equally important is the fact that Satan's marvels are brought into close proximity to the miracle of Creation. Satan is moved to wonder by the Providence of God displayed in Creation

and this wonder looks forward to his still greater astonishment at God's Grace.

As early as book III, before Satan arrives upon earth itself, he beholds the whole universe from the portal in its hard outer shell and

> Looks down with wonder at the sudden view
> Of all this World at once. (III. 542-3)

When Satan looks down upon Eden from the Tree of Life where he sits "like a Commorant" (IV 196) the poet tells us that

> Beneath him with new wonder now he views
> To all delight of human sense expos'd
> In narrow room Natures whole wealth. (IV. 205-7)

Having glimpsed Adam and Eve for the first time, Satan states in a soliloquy that they are

> to heav'nly Spirits bright
> Little inferior; whom my thoughts pursue
> With wonder. (IV. 361-3)

But stating that Satan is moved to wonder at the sight of Eden is not the same thing as evoking wonder in the reader of the poem. This Milton achieves by his subtly suggestive language which has the effect of suspending the reader's sense of time and suggests a sequence of scenes which do not follow one another in a clear order but melt into each other so that one picture may contain logical contradictions:

> Now came still Eevening on, and Twilight gray
> Had in her sober Liverie all things clad;
> Silence accompanied, for Beast and Bird,

They to thir grassie Couch, these to thir Nests
Were slunk, all but the wakeful Nightingale;
She a-l night long her amorous descant sung;
Silence was pleas'd: now glow'd the Firmament
With living Saphirs: Hesperus that led
The starrie Host, rode brightest, till the Moon
Rising in clouded Majestie, at length
Apparent Queen unvaild her peerless light,
And o're the dark her Silver Mantle threw.

(IV. 598-609)

The contradiction here is between the presence of silence and the song of the nightingale. We should expect the bird's melody to break the silence of Paradise, but instead of fading away before the nightingale's song, silence takes delight in it. Eden is not a place where particular beauties exist in isolation from each other, but everything relates to everything else and to the whole. The very shining of the stars seems to be a result of the pleasure silence bears in the nightingale's song. The closed rhythmical unit created by the juxtaposed trochee and iamb "Silence was pleas'd" is rent by the spondee "now glow'd" so that the glowing firmament seems to exist because of the silence rather than simultaneously with it. This effect is made more apparent by Milton's own punctuation than it is by that of most of his editors, for where he places a comma in line 604, they put a full-stop. This has the effect of replacing Milton's spondee with a trochee and changing the suggestion of a

relationship of causation between a bird's song and the shining of the stars to one of simple chronological progression.

Throughout Milton's description of Eden, each particular created object desires to participate in something other and greater than itself. Eden is not stationary but always seems to be moving towards God and striving for participation in Him:

> the mantling vine
> Lays forth her purple Grape, and gently creeps
> Luxuriant; meanwhile mummuring waters fall
> Down the slope hills, disperst, or in a lake,
> that to the Fringed Bank with Myrtle crown'd,
> Her chrystal mirror holds, unite thir streams.
> The Birds thir quire apply; aires, vernal aires,
> Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune
> The trembling leaves, while Universal Pan
> Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance
> Led on th'Eternal Spring. (IV. 258-68)

This vine seems to grow by choice rather than necessity. The lake, with its "chrystal mirror", is not quite anthropomorphized, but Milton's language is sufficient to suggest that it reflects the bank by will rather than the laws of the phenomenal world. But then the lake becomes wholly an object as the "mummuring waters" unite their streams in it. The flow of these streams is animated by the flow of Milton's syntax, which unites its streams even as they unite theirs, so that we only realize with the conclusion of line 263 that the "mummuring waters"

"the lake", the "chrystal mirror" and the "streams" are all one body of water. Still more remarkable in the way it joins disparate parts into a unity, is the description of the air which follows. The first "aires", following immediately from "the Birds thir quire apply" has a musical significance. But at once these melodies become "vernal aires" as the sound of the morning chorus metamorphoses into a spring breeze. But so subtle is the polyptoton that we hardly notice that a change in meaning has occurred. Air of which the very substance is music would be very delicious to breathe. But this air is not only breathed, it breathes. "Breathing the smell of field and grove", the air combines sensations of sound, touch and smell and fuses them into a synaesthetic whole. But then suddenly the air resumes its auditory significance, as the breezes "attune/The trembling leaves".

The changes of one thing into another in Eden, are unlike Satan's changes of shape. At best, his metamorphoses are tricks designed to deceive by concealing his true form. But the metamorphoses of air, water, music and foliage in Eden are true metamorphoses. They do not consist of the permeation of one body by another, but represent the expression of God's Glory through the material of His Creation. No one form, body or event in Eden can lay claim to self-sufficient being, but all partake in a universal dance which expresses ultimate Being.

We have seen how the song of a nightingale, co-operating with silence, can cause the stars to glow. What, then, might not

the singing of angels achieve? At one point in book IV, Eve asks Adam why the stars shine throughout the night when none can see them. As part of his reply, Adam reassures her that the stars do indeed have spectators, for "Millions of spiritual Creatures walk the Earth/Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep,"

> how often from the steep
> Of echoing Hill or Thicket have we heard
> Celestial voices to the midnight air,
> Sole, or responsive each to others note
> Singing their great Creator: oft in bands
> While they keep watch, or nightly rounding walk
> With Heav'nly touch of instrumental sounds
> In full harmonic number join'd, thir songs
> Divide the night, and lift our thanks to Heaven.
>
> (IV. 680-8)

Although it is undoubtedly the singing of angels which is described here, Milton does not say so explicitly. The grammatical subject from line 683 onwards is "Celestial voices", for although we understand "they" in line 685 to refer to angels, strictly, it is the "Celestial voices" who "keep watch" and "nightly rounding walk". The effect of this grammatical construction is similar to that found in the book of Genesis when Adam and Eve

> heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden.[2]

Voices cannot literally walk, but Milton's synecdoche is

exactly right because it suggests that angels are as present and substantial as any of God's creatures but also mysterious and inaccessible to human scrutiny. Milton's words also suggest that God is heard in this music, through the angels' own voices. The words responsible for this are "Singing thir great Creator" (684). These can be read as meaning both that the angels sing of God and that they sing to Him. But the absence of a preposition also renders "singing" a transitive verb. Understood thus, the "great Creator" is neither an insubstantial theme, nor a distant recipient of praise, but wells into the song itself as an immediate, audible presence. Even the angels are a medium through which God expresses Himself. The words "rounding" and "Divide" are also particularly rich in this passage. The primary sense of "rounding" refers to the guards' nightly patrol around the circuit of Eden as they "keep watch" over their human charge. Later in the same book the word reappears in this context:

Now drew they nigh/The Western Point, where those half-
rounding guards
Just met and closing stood in squadron joind
Awaiting next command. (IV. 861-4)

But also present in "rounding" is the sense of a "round" as

> a kind of song sung by two or more persons
> each taking up the strain in turn. (O.E.D. 19)

This certainly applies to the angels, who sing

> Sole, or responsive each to others note. (IV. 683)

A round is usually a religious song, but there are also

roundelays, shepherd's songs. The religous nature of the angels' song is obvious, but their surroundings, "the steep/Of echoing Hill or Thicket" would throw back on the primarily military sense of "bands" the gentler sense of a band of shepherds singing roundelays as they tend their human flock.

Since Adam's description of the angels' song is initiated by an explanation of stellar motion ("These have their course to finish, round the Earth") there is even a correspondence between the dance of the stars and the movement of their angelic spectators.

This makes for a beautiful co-operation between "rounding" and "Divide". The primary meaning of "Divide" is "to divide the night into watches". But stirred into life by the passage's musical context is the meaning

> To perform or execute 'divisions', to descant.
>
> (O.E.D. 11b)

In dividing the night, the angels fill the air with song. Since "Divide" is transitive it also suggests that night is a song which the angels sing into being. Thus far "Divide" matches "rounding" in suggesting both military watchfulness and musical richness. But even this is not all, for "Divide the night" works with "and lifts our thoughts to Heaven" to suggest that "night" is a curtain which the angels' song pulls open to reveal the things beyond. This reading of "Divide" contrasts with "rounding", for whereas the latter word suggests circular movement, "Divide" speaks of a direct, linear path to Heaven.

Later in the poem this contrast between circular and

linear movement is to be developed in such a way that the relationship between the two kinds of movement becomes a collision as well as a contrast. Circular or intricate patterns of movement are to be tainted with the suggestion of aimlessness or even deviation from the straight path of virtue. I shall examine this collision in greater detail in my final chapter when I look at the words "wander" and "way". In book IV, however, there is harmony between circular and linear patterns of movement. As the angels walk around the circuit of Eden, their songs divide the shadows of night and lift the thoughts of Adam and Eve to Heaven. This they do by the musical rounds and divisions they execute.

Not only the angels, but the rivers of Eden and the stars which shine above the Garden move in intricate, circular and even confusing patterns. The rivers which run diverse through Eden's bounds and pass out into the lower world "wandring many a famous Realm", roll on their way

With mazie error under pendant shades. (IV 239)

In Raphael's account of God's exhaltation of the Son in book V, the correspondence between the circular movements of the angels and the stars, a correspondence which had only been hinted at in book IV, is more fully developed. The dance of the angels about God's throne "Resembles nearest" the dance of the stars and planets,

mazes intricate,
Eccentric, intervolv'd, yet regular
Then most, when most irregular they seem. (V 622-4)

In both these brief passages Milton uses vocabulary which is later to be associated with sin. Mazes, error and eccentricity are all to be tainted with the suggestion of Satanic aberration. Some of these words suggest, in themselves, a complexity we would not expect to find in Eden. In the beautiful canticle which Adam and Eve sing at the beginning of book V, for example, they thus command the planets to praise God:

> And yee five other wandring Fires that move
> In mystic dance not without song, resound
> His praise, who out of Darkness call'd up Light.
>
> (V. 177-9)

Here "wandring Fires" means "planets", but in book IX Milton is to use the same words in a simile which likens Satan to a will o' the wisp, leading Eve through a bog to her destruction. But whatever its portent for the future, Milton's vocabulary of aberration and complexity imputes no sin to Eden before the Fall. Although the movements of Eden's rivers and the stars above them may seem irregular, they are "regular/Then most, when most irregular they seem." Nothing is lost or out of place in the universal pattern, but each phase of the cosmic round succeeds the next in the manner most propitious for the expression of God's Glory through matter. Even the darkness of night is not real but is an illusion created for the enriching of Eden with variety. The darkness of night is the shadow of the earth, rotating around the sphere of the moon like the hand of a clock, as the sun dances around the

earth on the other side. In book IV the poet refers to this rotating cone of shadow in order to define the passage of time:

> Now had night measur'd with her shaddowie Cone
> Half way up Hill this vast Sublunar Vault. (IV 776-7)

Beyond and to either side of this shadow, the universe is Full of Light and song, with sun, stars, and azure sky all visible at once. When Satan looks down into the universe from its highest and outermost sphere in book III, his vision of stars, sun, planets, moon and sky is purer than is ever possible from earth, because he is far above its rotating shadow.

> Round he surveys, and well might, where he stood
> So high above the circuling Canopy
> Of Night's extended shade. (III. 555-7)

Every movement within the universe is ordered, patterned and lawful. The rivers of Eden and the stars above may wander with error but they do not wander into error. This does not mean, however, that the movements of Eden do not look forward to the Fall. Sin is not seen as something inevitable, contained within the very matter of Creation, but irregularity and error are glimpsed as a possibility. Yet the suggestion of their possible presence in Eden is made in order that God's Grace to Man may be prefigured in the way this Providence governs Creation. Consider, for example, the movements of this river:

> Southward through Eden went a River large,
> Nor chang'd his course, but through the shaggy hill
> Pass'd underneath engulft, for God had thrown
> That Mountain as his Garden mould high rais'd

> Upon the rapid current, which through veins
> Of porous Earth with kindly thirst up-drawn,
> Rose a fresh Fountain, and with many a rill
> Water'd the Garden; thence united fell
> Down the steep glade, and met the nether Flood,
> Which from his darksome passage now appears,
> And now divided into four main Streams,
> Runs diverse, wandring many a famous Realm
> And Country whereof here needs no account.
>
> (IV 223-35)

It is this same river which rolls, a few lines later, "With mazie error". When looked at as a whole, this passage may be seen to prefigure the placing of Man in Paradise, his Fall, banishment from Eden and subjection to Hell. But also prefigured is the sudden incarnation of Christ, His Resurrection and, through him, the Resurrection of all men, His releasing of Man from the rule of Hell and the dispersal of His Gospels through the world of history. The river encounters Paradise, thrown in its path by God, and at once passes "underneath engulft". But it is not wholly lost, for one spring arises from the earth as a fountain and nourishes the soil around it with its waters. This Fountain is like Christ in emerging suddenly from the darkness to bring life, and like Christ, it passes down to meet the "nether Flood", which emerges from its "darksome passage" as if to greet it. Having effected this release, the waters of the Fountain flow with those of the recovered streams through four main channels

into a wandering labyrinth of rivers surrounded by countries not yet given names.

I do not mean to suggest that the above passage is intended as an allegory. For all their portentousness, Milton's river, fountain, cavern and hill remain uncompromisingly themselves. There is no sense of a contriving hand arranging every phenomenon to fit a preconceived pattern. This is because Milton believed the actual world to evince God's Providence. He does not need to present us with an allegory, for Eden, like the world as a whole, is itself, for Milton, a manifestation of God's Providence. It is Eden, not Paradise Lost which is allegorical. But whilst the passage may not be an allegory, it may be called an emblem. An emblem, unlike an allegory, does not melt away once its secret has been discovered, but remains itself. It is not a story or moral superimposed upon an object, but is itself an object which displays certain feature applicable to other objects or circumstances.

The suitability of this Edenic river as an emblem for God's Providence lies in the fact that we are able to see all of it at once. The fountain passes down into the lower waters as a source of guidance and nourishment, but at the same time it is still a fountain. In beholding Paradise, we are able, as we are not in our own lives, or even with history, to encompass the total picture. We are removed from time itself and are enabled to see past, present and future at once. In the drama of history we can only deal with one situation at a time. Even the Mission of Christ is unfolded

in the poem as a story. But Milton's justification of God's ways to men requires that we see beyond this and encompass the whole of Eternity as a pattern of divine Providence. The timelessness of Eden, as expressed in the very precision with which one cycle succeeds another, and all cycles pass through each other, provides a very suitable medium through which this justification can be furthered.

II. Thy Just Circumference, O World

Although allusion had been made to the act of Creation in epic poems (both Christian and Pagan) previous to Paradise Lost, no poet, before or since, has developed this subject so completely as has Milton. I shall compare Milton's account of the performance of Creation first of all with those of Virgil and the Beowulf poet and then with that of Ovid and the Metamorphoses.

In the Aeneid and Beowulf the act of Creation is described by court bards performing before a royal audience. In Paradise Lost the tale of Creation is unfolded before Adam by the angel Raphael and thus it too is a related rather than a direct action. In so far as Raphael follows the bards of the Aeneid and Beowulf in singing of the Creation before a dignified audience, it is possible that we are intended to see Adam and Eve as a King and Queen, listening like Aeneas and Dido, or Hrothgar to the divine song of the court bard. When Adam first goes forth to welcome Raphael to his Edenic

bower, he does so as a monarch greeting an ambassador, yet

> without more train
> Accompanied than with his own compleat
> Perfections; in himself was all his state,
> More solemn than the tedious pomp that waits
> On Princes, when thir rich Retinue long
> Of Horses led, and Grooms besmear'd with Gold
> Dazzles the crowd, and sets them all agape.
>
> (V. 351-7)

Whereas the songs of Iopas in the Aeneid and the unnamed "scop" in Beowulf span only a few lines, however, that of Raphael takes a whole book to tell of Creation. Moreover, his tale is not drawn from tradition or invention and performed for entertainment only--it is an eye-witness account of a genuine miracle now related to Adam in order to "glorify the Maker, and infer/ Thee also happier" (VII. 116-7). I hope to show that it also prepares the reader or auditor of the poem for the revelation of divine Providence which follows the Fall. It is thus directly related to the thesis of Paradise Lost and forwards Milton's justification of God's ways to men.

I shall consider how Raphael's account of Creation does this in a little while, but first I wish to compare and contrast the significance of that account with those found in the Aeneid and Beowulf. These Creation songs do not forward the theses of these poems (Beowulf, as a "primary" epic, does not have a thesis at all in the sense I have used this word of the Aeneid and Paradise Lost) but serve rather to embellish

their arguments and enrich the particular moments where they occur with ironic or dramatic significance.

The Creation song of the bard Iopas is performed at the court of Dido in book I of the Aeneid. Iopas sings as follows:

> cithara crinitus Iopas
> personat aurata, docuit quem maximus Atlas,
> hic canit errantem lunam solisque labores,
> unde hominum genus et pecudes, unde imber et ignes,
> Arcturum pluuisque Hyadas geminosque triones,
> quid tantum Oceano properent se tingere soles
> hiberni, vel quae tardis mora noctibus obstet.
>
> (I. 740-6)

> (Iopas struck his lyre
> a golden note, as Atlas the great had taught.
> He sang the wandering moon, the toiling sun;
> whence came mankind and beast, whence rain and fire,
> Archurus, the rain-stars, and the twin Triones,
> why the sun hurries to dip below the seas
> in winter, and why the nights must limp and lag).

Compared with Milton's, Virgil's Creation has little vigour and inherent goodness and its creator is anonymous and unimportant. There is movement and change in this universe, but all change is from a higher to a lower state, all movement is laborious. Whereas Milton's sun is

> jocund to run/His longitude through Heav'ns
> high road. (VII. 372-3)

Virgil's can only toil its way across the sky, being "labores" rather than "jocund". Virgil's moon furnishes a similar contrast. The words "errantem lunam" ("wandering moon") suggest a vast vacvity through which the lunar orb finds its way only with the greatest difficulty. Milton's moon, however, does not need to find its own path across the heavens, for it is propelled by a single force which causes all of the celestial bodies to dance in harmony:

> then in the East her turn she shines,
> Revolv'd on Heav'n's great Axle, and her Reign
> With thousand lesser Lights dividual holds.
>
> (VII. 380-2)

Nowhere in Iopas's song is any heavenly body described, even metaphorically, as "holding reign". They are lonely and weary wayfares rather than splendid monarchs. The only movement in the firmament described in Iopas's song which may be said to even approximate to anything like eagerness, is the sun's willingness to set, and the tone of that brief statement is at once modified by the description of the longevity of the slow winter nights. Throughout Iopas's Creation song, there are words which suggest the passing of time and which hint at both the urgency and meaninglessness of quotidien existence (eg: :errantem", "labores", "properent", "tardis", "obstet"). The span of daylight is short and darkness lies all around, denying any ultimate meaning to the world. But, for all its tone of melancholy, Iopas's

Creation song is far from nihilistic. The song itself is a thing of great beauty, as the word "aurata" in line 741 subtly suggests. Strictly, "aurata" qualifies "cithara" in the line before and refers to the metallic substance of Iopa's instrument, but the ellipsis of the object of "personat" adds to the strict meaning "he fills (the hall) with the sound of his golden lyre", the fuller, richer meaning "he overflows with golden sound".

The effect of Iopas's song upon his audience is to fill them with delight and unite Carthaginians and Trojans in applause:

> ingeminant plausu Tyrii, Truesque sequuntur.
> nec non et vario noctern sermone trahebat
> infelix Dido langumque bibebat amorem.
>
> (I. 747-9)
>
> (The Tyrians cheered aloud; the Trojans
> joined them. And Dido, too, prolonged the
> night with talk and to her sorrow drank
> long draughts of love.)

The commingling of joy and sorrow in these lines parallels that in the Creation song which immediately precedes them. The epithet "infelix" is ironic when used to describe Dido at a cart festival where she feels the first stirrings of her fatal love. The epithet looks to the future rather than the present and thus follows the Creation song in displaying a melancholy understanding of time as a process of fall and degeneration. Both verbally and in the actions it portrays, this brief description of the effect of Iopas's

song echoes the song itself. The words "vario noctern sermone trahebat", for example, look back to "tardis mora noctibus obstet". Dido wishes to prolong the night with conversation, but the verbal and ideational correspondences between the two lines (only one line apart) translate the tone of hiemal dissolution from Iopas's song into Dido's convivial hospitality with the result that her queenly command of the powers of social intercourse are overshadowed by the suggestion of everlasting night. Even the gesture with which Dido reaches for and drains her goblet of wine is described in language similar to that used to describe the sun's sinking into the ocean. The action of drinking begins just before Iopas commences his song, when we are told that Dido reaches for her cup:

> dixit et in mensam laticum libaist honorem
> primaque, libato, summo tenus altigit ore.
>
> (I. 736.7)
>
> (She spoke and poured libation on the table
> then-only then-just wet her lip with wine.)

The verb "attigit" (from "attingo"-"to reach") is echoed in sound and fulfilled in sense, when we come, a few lines later, to the description of the winter sun dipping in the ocean:

> quid tantum Oceano properent se tingere soles
> hiberni (I. 745-6).

The verb "se tingere" is from "tinguo" meaning to plunge rather than "attingo", and thus "attigit" cannot be said

to be a form of it, but the two words are similar enough for the former to develop and fulfil the sense of reaching out and drinking initiated by the latter. Dido's drinking from the cup is thus verbally echoed in the sunset of Iopa's song and we feel that the queen's own "sunset" is imminent. Immediately after the song, ideas of drinking and misfortune come together in the line:

infelix Dido longumque bibebat amorem (I. 747)

(unhappy Dido drank long draughts of love.)

It is as if the whole of Iopas' song is a metaphor for the slow waning and tragic demise of Dido's splendour as the hitherto self-sufficient queen of Carthage.

But if Iopas' Creation song suggests Dido's predicament, it also reflects that of Aeneas. Iopas' teacher, we are told, had been Atlas. This seems strange. We would have expected his mentor to have been a god or hero more closely associated with music, such as Apollo or Orpheus. But Atlas is neither god nor mortal; he is a Titan, one of the conquered race of immortals driven from Olympus by Zeus and imprisoned by him in various places of the universe. Most were consigned to Tartarus, but to Atlas was given the task of bearing the heavens upon his shoulders. Like Atlas, Aeneas is an exile (as also is Dido) and like the Titan, Aeneas bears a great burden. His is not a physical burden, however, but consists of his responsibility for the safety and well-being of his followers. When he receives the shield made by Hephaestus from his mother,

Aeneas discovers that his shoulders are destined to bear only fame and glory ("altolens umero famamque et fata nepotum" VIII 731) but as he sits an exile in Dido's court, for him, as for Atlas and Dido herself, the universe seems a weary burden leading only to death.

Iopas' Creation song is thus not so much a celebration of Creation as it is a reflection of the sufferings of Dido and Aeneas and a presentment of the queen's fate. It serves to enrich a particular moment in the poem's action rather than to forward its thesis or say anything important about Creation itself.

The Creation song in Beowulf is in many respects much closer to that in Paradise Lost. It is a Christian song and is performed as a celebration of God. The movements of stellar and earthly bodies are not weary and laborious as in the song of Iopas but swift and lively.Like those of Milton, they seem to enjoy their existence. The sun and moon and the earth itself are described as shining ("wlitebeorhtne") and the universe is fashioned and decorated as if by a great artist. The Creation in the song of the Beowulf poet is not felt to be subject to slow degeneration and the weariness of time as is that in the song of Iopas, rather it seems to be threatened from the outside in the person of Grendel. Its own beauty and wholeness are intact. Strictly, it is not the creation which Grendel is attacking but the hall Heorot. But since the song itself is performed at Heorot, and the making of the song springs spontaneously from the creative

energy responsible for the shaping of the hall, this song of making serves to characterize Grendel the destroyer as the enemy of Creation itself. The word for bard in Anglo-Saxon is "scop", a word which (like "poet") means "maker". The descriptions of the building of the hall, the making of the song and the act of Creation itself are juxtaposed to the introduction of Grendel:

Đā se ellengæst earfoðlīce
þrāge geþolode, se þe in þystrum bād,
þæt hē dōgora gewhām dreām gehyrde
hlūdne in healle; þær wæs hearpan swēg,
swutol sang scopes. Sægde se þe cūþe
frumsceaft fīra feorran reccan,
cwæð þæt se Ælmihtiga eorðan wæter bebeorgeð,
wlitebeorhtne wang, swa wæter bebeorgeð,
gesette sigehrēþig sunnan ond mōnan,
lēoman tō lēohte landbūendum,
ond gefrætwade foldan sceātas
leomum ond lēafum, lif ēac gescōp,
cynna gehwylcum þara þe cwice hwyrfaþ—
Swa þa drihtguman dreāmum lifdon,
ēadiglice, oð ðæt ān ongan
fyrene fremman fēond on helle.

Beowulf 11. 86-101

> (At that time there was a terrible fiend who dwelt in misery down in darkness. The sound of merrymaking which he heard each day resounding from the hall was torment to him. There was the swelling of the harp and the clear voice of the bard lifted in song. He sang of the Creation of man in the beginning of days and how the Lord fashioned the earth as a shining plain belted around with waters. He set the sun and moon in the sky in all their splendour, great luminaries to provide light for the dwellers of the land. He decked all corners of the earth with leaves and branches and bestowed life upon all kinds of creatures which now walked upon the earth. In this fashion the warriors lived in joy till the time came when that fiend began to work them woe.)[3]

Thus while the act of Creation is of interest to the Beowulf poet in and for itself, the song of the "scop" at Heorot, like the song of Iopas in Dido's court, serves to add colour and significance to a particular moment in the poem's action. It works like a simile in that it enriches the reader's or auditor's response to the creation of Heorot by introducing the idea of the Creation of the world itself. The "scop's" song, like the account of Raphael, displays reverence for God and wonder at his works, but it makes no claim, as Raphael's narration does, to be an eye-witness account. The "scop's" song is used by the Beowulf poet as an illustration of creative energy.

The Creation of which the "scop" sings does not itself constitute any part of the poem's action. The Creation in Paradise Lost is also related rather than direct action, but it is related with the authority of a beholder and the action related is so recent as to seem almost immediate in its re-telling. It does not serve to illuminate or decorate any other moment or episode in the poem, but commands attention for its own sake and serves also to illustrate God's Providence, the assertion of which is Milton's thesis. Moreover, the Providential act of Creation is described in terms which present it as an act of mercy, thus looking forward to the mercy which God's Providence is to extend to fall mankind. At first glance this seems to place Milton's presentation of Creation alongside that of Ovid in the Metamorphoses. In both poems Creation consists of the imposing of order and structure upon the unco-ordinated raw material of Chaos. In both poems, furthermore, this imposition of order is described as a release. What at first presents itself to the imagination as the limitation and curtailment of the vigour of primordal matter, is paradoxically asserted by both poets to be a liberation from bondage and a bestowing upon matter of the freedom of things to become themselves. In the Metamorphoses, Ovid expresses the paradox very clearly in these words:

> quae postquam evolvit coecoque exemit acervo,
> dissociata locis concordi pace ligavit. (I. 22-3)

(When thus he had released these elements and
freed them from the blind heap of things, he
set them each in its own place and bound
them fast in harmony.)[4]

The word "ligavit" (from "ligo"--"to bind with thongs") directly collides with "evolvit" and "exemit" (from "evolvo" --"to fly away" and "exeo"--"to leave"), but Ovid challenges the reader's conceptions of what freedom and bondage are and what is the nature of the relationship between them, by employing both ideas to describe the act of Creation. It is only when the material of chaos is bound that matter is truly free.

In my first chapter, under the section on marvels of achievement, I argued that the Son's victory in the field of battle was brought about by a display of Creative rather than destructive power. Whereas the warring angels had uprooted the hills and mountains from heaven's landscape, the Son's entry had been accompanied by the returning of "the uprooted Hills...../Each to his place" (V. 781-2).

In book VII Raphael prefaces his account of Creation with these words:

Know then, that after Lucifer from Heav'n
.....Fell with his flaming Legions through the Deep
Into his place..... (VII. 131-5).

For Milton, as for Ovid before him, the putting of things in their place is fundamental to Creation, for Creation does not consist of producing things from nothing, but consists

of the ordering and arranging of the raw material of chaos. As Ovid had written of the arranging of the elements:

> dissociata locis concordi pace ligavit (I. 23)
> (he set them each in its own place and
> bound them fast in harmony).

When Milton, through Raphael, tells us that Satan was put in his place, therefore, he means not only that the rebel archangel's pride was checked, he also means that he found his natural setting within the universal scheme in accordance with the laws through which Creation came about. The force which causes Satan to fall to Hell is the same force which causes the hot elements of Chaos to separate from the cold, the dry from the moist and the light from the heavy. Just as the unnamed god in Ovid's Metamorphoses causes the fiery weightless element to "leap up and make place for itself upon the topmost height" ("emicuit summaque locum sibi fecit in arce") and places the air, the earth and water below the element of fire in their various appointed stations, so also, in Milton's account of Creation, "downward purg'd"

> The black tartareous cold Infernal dregs
> Adverse to life; then founded, then conglob'd
> Like things to like, the rest to several place
> Disparted, and between spun out the Air,
> And Earth self-balanc't on her Centre hung.
>
> (VII 234-42)

It is just this fashion that (following the war in Heaven) the rebel angels fall "through the Deep/Into (their) place".

Even Moloch, who in the council in Hell, argues that the ascent to Heaven will be easy because the angels belong there, do so from the very principle which has placed them where they are:

> in our proper motion we ascend
> Up to our native seat: descent and fall
> To us is adverse. Who but felt of late
> When the fierce foe hung on our brok'n Rear
> Insulting, and pursu'd us through the Deep,
> With what compulsion and laborious flight
> We sunk this low? (II. 75-81)

Moloch is wrong in interpreting this principle as he does, by applying it to himself and his companions as if they were still angels of Heaven. Whilst their nature is still angelic, it has been defiled by their free will with the result that they are now angels of Hell. But although the principle to which Moloch refers does not apply to him in the way he claims, the principle itself is still sound. I shall look briefly at this principle, for it determines much of the poetic texture of Milton's description of the act of Creation and provides the poem with a link between that description and the central thesis of eternal Providence.

C.S. Lewis, in The Discarded Image quotes from Chaucer's Hous of Fame to identify this principle, central to Medieval and Renaissance cosmology, as the concept of "kindly enclyning":

Every kindly thing that is
Hath a kindly stede ther he
May best in hit conserved be;
Unto which place every thing
Through his kindly enclyning
Moveth for to come to.[5]

C.S. Lewis descrives "kindly enclyning" as consisting of "certain sympathies, antipathies, and strivings inherent in matter itself".

Everything has its right place, its home,
the region that suits it, and, if not forcibly
restrained, moves thither by a sort of homing instinct.[6]

Moloch's assertion in the council of Hell is that the natural motion of the rebel angels towards Heaven has been restrained by God and that they may return there because they are drawn by natural sympathy. God's thrusting of the angels down to Hell is thus seen by Moloch as an unnatural exertion of power. It is rather like holding a cork under water---as soon as one's hold is loosened, the cork will spring to the surface. The "kindly stede" of the angels, in Moloch's argument, is the Empyreal Heaven, just as, in my analogy, the "kindly stede" of the cork is the surface of the water. Moloch's speech, like many of Milton's own statements as narrator in Paradise Lost, thus characterizes the expulsion of the rebel angels as the vanquishing of strength by strength. The angels have been cast out from Heaven by the will and power of omnipotent deity. But in the brief statement that the angels have

fallen into their own place, Milton suggests that Hell has replaced Heaven as their "kindly stede" and henceforward it is thither that they will be drawn by "kindly enclyning". Throughout his account of the act of Creation, Milton describes each thing, whether mineral, vegetable or animal, as participating in its own Creation and striving to reach its own appointed place in the unversal scheme. In this, his account is similar to that of Ovid, for Milton develops Ovid's paradoxical way of looking upon Creation as both a binding and a releasing. The elements of Chaos are bound and held in specific places, but from this imposition of order and harmony upon cacophonous disorder, objects and beings spring into existence as if released from long imprisonment. Ovid writes thus of the liberation of the stars:

> Vix ita limitibus dissaepserat omnia certis,
> cum, quae pressa diu fuerant caligine caeca,
> sidera coepernt toto effervesiere caelo.
>
> (I. 69-71)
>
> (Scarce had he thus parted off all things
> within their determined bounds, when the
> stars, which had long been lying hid crushed
> down beneath the darkness, began to gleam
> throughout the sky).

The stars are not so much fashioned for the first time as they are released from darkness and revealed to sight. Similarly, in Paradise Lost

Light/Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure
Sprung from the Deep. (VII 243-4)

where it had always existed, at least in potential.

Throughout book VII, Milton's rhythms are energetic, his diction insistent and the pace of action swift. The word "now" and other words which serve to locate an action or event in time, do not, as they do in book IV, serve to suspend time and suggest a universe where all change consists of the world's exchanging one countenance for another, but serve to indicate immediate action and to portray dynamic occurrences. Consider, for example, the appearance of mountains from under the waters as the waters are gathered into one place:

God said,/ Be gather'd now ye Waters under Heav'n
Into one place, and let dry Land appear.
Immediately the Mountains huge appear
Emergent, and thir broad bare backs upheave
Into the clouds. (VII 282-7)

Between the divine command and its execution there is no obstacle. There is, however, a change in tense. Hitherto the only tense used to describe the act of Creation has been the perfect, but the word "immediately" signals a shift to the present. The imperitive "appear" in line 284 is answered by the same word, this time in the present indicative, when we come to the following line. This change in tense is accompanied by a change in rhythm as

alliterating spondee "bare backs" breaks into what has until now been an almost unvarying iambic rhythmical pattern. The breaking of the rhythmic flow suggests the parting end eddying of the waters as the strange new substance of earth appears above their surface for the first time. The three alliterating monosyllables and the unexpected spondee also cause a deceleration in the pace of the verse paragraph, a deceleration that is all the more marked due its contrast with the immediately preceeding acceleration caused by the polysyllables "Emergent", "Mountains" and "Immediately" (tetrasyllabic by syncopation). In this way Milton uses diction, rhythm and tense changes to guide the reader into responding to each new appearing substance or creature with wonder and surprise. The word "upheave" suggests that the mountains themselves are moving, striving upwards by their own inherent "kindly enclyning". Strictly, this is not true. They are uncovered by the waters and do not move an inch of themselves. But by turning our angle of vision around, Milton suggests that the mountains participate in their own Creation and are released into being rather than merely revealed to sight.

Later in the same day of Creation as that in which the waters are gathered into one place and dry land appears, vegetation makes its first appearance upon the earth. Once again, the eager movements and joyful emergence of the newly created material forms are reflected in the lively rhythms and varying pace of the verse paragraph. It is one of the

characteristic features of Milton's verse style that his lines flow into one another and the pauses occur within the lines more frequently than they appear at the end of them. Consequently, it is not surprising to find the same technique here; but whereas Milton's caesurae ordinarily are placed so as not to split any foot in two, and usually are to be found after the third foot, occasionally after the first or second, and rarely after the fourth, here they appear irregularly but in almost every line, and often split individual feet in half. The effect is to create a tortuous rhythm which twists and turns in several directions and when it seems to have reached a part where its energy is expended, suddenly puts forth a new shoot like the very vines, bushes and trees described:

> Forth flourish'd thick the clust'ring Vine, forth crept
> The smelling Gourd, up stood the corny Reed
> Embaltl'd in her field; and th'humble Shrub,
> And Bush with frizzl'd hair implicit: last
> Rose as in Dance the stately Trees, and spread
> Thir branches hung with copious fruit: or gemm'd
> Thir Blossoms: with high Woods the Hills were crown'd,
> With tufts the valleys and each fountain side,
> With borders long the Rivers. That Earth now
> Seem'd like to Heav'n, a seat where God might dwell.
>
> (VII. 320-9)

The result is a patterm of pauses followed by trochees or spondees. For example, "Forth flourish'd", "forth crept",

"up stood". Sometimes the spondee is preceded not by the caesurae but by a pyrrhic so that the total number of stressed syllables in the line is still five. For example:

...Thir Blossoms: with high woods the Hills were crown'd...
With borders long the Rivers. That Earth now seem'd like to
Heav'n.

(VII 326. 328)

Initially, the sentence has a paratractic structure, the statements "Forth flourish'd", "forth crept" and "up stood" working to introduce one idea at a time. But as the verse paragraph progresses and the scene becomes more plentiful, Milton's syntax assumes its more familiar hypotactic arrangement and verbs look forward and backward simultaneously as dependent clauses are woven into the total fabric. Thus the juxtaposed and anaphonic clauses "With tufts the valleys and each fountain side,/With borders long the Rivers" both look back to the verb "were crown'd" which has already governed "with high Woods the Hills." The growing complexity of syntax matches and reflects the increasing richness and ever expanding area of the scene described. Whereas the beginning of the verse paragraph, the meaning of each is self-explanatory, as the paragraph progresses, each following individual clause can only be understood in the context of the whole. Milton's language thus suggests not only the Creation of particulars, but also the Creation of the harmony which exists between those particulars. His

description of the Creation surpasses even that of Ovid, for here, in addition to seeing each individual kind of vegetation released into being, we also see the coming into being of the harmonious contiguity of the different forms of foliage and the suitability of each kind of vegetation to its natural surroundings.

Yet even as he suggests the Creation of an harmonious interrelation of parts, Milton does not lose sight of the parts themselves. His description of the appearance of vegetation upon the earth is rich both in metaphor and word-play. "Gemm'd" (325) and "humble" (322), for example, both retain their Latin significance. In Latin "gemma" means a bud, a meaning which is obviously present here, but Milton's use of the word also embraces its significance as a precious stone, thus suggesting the opulence of the scene and the plastic tangibility of the buds which hang upon the blossoming boughs of the trees. "Humble", in English suggests lowliness of status rather than stature, but in Latin, the adjective "humilis" means "low" in the sense of lying close to the ground and was only used figuratively to suggest obscurity of birth, rank or position. Here in Paradise Lost it suggests both the low position of shrubs in the Chain of Being into which Chaos is arranged and the tenacity with which such forms of vegetatuon cling to the earth.

It is in the description of beasts, however, that Milton's account of the Creation is perhaps most vivid. In attributing sentience and eagerness to the mineral and vegetable parts of

his universe, Milton is speaking, at least in part, metaphorically. The mountains, forests, reeds, bushes and vines are drawn upwards by their "kindly enclyning" as if motivated by will, but they are not actually so motivated. As Chaucer's words had informed us, the "enclyning" of all things to their proper "stede" is "kindly" (ie: natural to them) but not necessarily volitional. With the beasts, however, eagerness and volition are real rather than metaphorical and their appearance on the sixth day of Creation is something of a fulfilment of all that has gone before. Only the heavenly bodies have had anything like intelligence or sentience up to this point, and only Man is to possess these qualities afterwards.

Yet for all that the fauna of the Creation are different in kind from its flora, Milton describes their first appearance in terms similar to those in which he had described the first appearance of the earth's vegetation. In part this adds strength to the language of volition in which the growth of the trees and flowers had been described and this seems to confirm our sense of Milton's materialism. But the very similarity of language also serves to point to the differences between beast and vegetable and makes us look anew upon familiar forms and wonder at their beauty and symmetry as if we had never seen them before. Consider the first appearances of the stag, the elephant and the sheep:

> the swift Stag from under ground
> Bore up his branching head: scarce from his mould
> Behemoth biggest born of Earth upheav'd
> His vastness: Fleec't the Flocks and bleating rose,
> As Plants..... (VII. 469-73)

The word "branching", referring to the stag's antlers is metaphorical. It draws our attention to the correspondence in shape between the animal's antlers and the branches of a tree. Only a hundred lines previously we had seen the appearance of real trees. Like the stag, they appeared "from under ground" (489) and had "spread/Thir branches" (324-5). Both stag and trees arise from the earth with great speed, so when we see a second set of branches emerging from the crumbling soil, it is as if we were witnessing the birth of more trees. Consequently, when the stag makes its appearance as a stag, it is almost surprising. It is as if the tree has become a stag. This furnishes a very rich contrast with Ovid, for in the Metamorphoses we consistently see people and animals change into trees. Their natural vigour and liveliness is imprisoned within hard, unmoving wood and their limbs freeze into fixed branches. Consider, for example, the metamorphosis of Daphne:

> vix prece finita torpor gravis occupat artus,
> mollia cinguntur tenui praecordia libro,
> in frondem crines, in ramas bracchia crescunt,
> pes modo tam veox pigris radicibus haeret,
> ora cacumen habet: remanet nitor unus in illa.
>
> (I. 548-52)

> (Scarce had she thus prayed when a down-dragging numbness seized her limbs, and her soft sides were bright with thin bark. Her hair was changed to leaves, her arms to branches. Her feet, but now so swift, grew fast in sluggish rocks, and her head was now but a tree's top. Her gleaming beauty alone remained.)

In Milton's Creation, however, this kind of metamorphosis is turned inside out. The stag is not imprisoned but is unlocked from its "tree" to run freely over the earth.

We are told that the sheep rose "as plants". In part this doubtless refers to their number and the fact that they spring from the earth. But their being "fleec't" also looks back to the bushes, which were "with frizzl'd hair implicit" (323). So far the correspondence is close, but what are we to say of "bleating"? By no stretch of the imagination can any of the vegetative parts of Milton's universe be said to be vocal. The word "bleating" renders the plant simile inadequate before it is even given. As with the stag, Milton likens the animal to a humbler but not dissimilar part of Creation, where the created object, for all its gifts or virtues, does not enjoy those lavished upon the corresponding beast. This clash of ideas makes the beast's own distinctive gifts more apparent.

Just as the emergence of the stag looks back to that of the trees and represents a development and fulfilment of the earlier creature, and the sheep looks back to the

"frizzl'd" hùshes and plants, so the appearance of the elephant provides both a correspondence and a contrast with the appearance of the mountains when the waters were gathered into one place. Milton uses the same word "upheave" to describe both materializations. The mountains "upheave" their "broad bare backs....into the clouds" and the elephant "upheav'd/His vastness." But as I have stated above, the mountains do not really move at all. They seem to do so because they are revealed to sight bytthe waters, but this kinesis is apparent rather than real. The arising of the elephant, however, springs from genuine vivacity and the desire to be free and above ground. The elephant is a mountain which is alive and can therefore enjoy the freedom which the mercy of God's Providence bestows upon it. It is also, for all its bulk, a work of beauty and craftmanship no less than the stag.

This point is gently but firmly made in the word "mould", which spans several meanings at once. On the simplest level, "mould" means

> Loose, broken, or friable earth; hence, the surface soil, which may be readily broken up.
>
> (O.E.D. 1)

The mould is thus the soil from which the elephant raises its massive body, and which crumbles into loose and broken clods as he does so. But a mould is also

> A hollow form or matrix into which fluid or plastic material is cast or pressed and allowed

> to cool or harden so as to form an object of a particular shape or pattern.
>
> (O.E.D. $5b^3.2$)

Thus a mould can also be said to be

> A pattern by which something is shaped
>
> (O.E.D. $5b^3.1$)

These separate meanings force beautifully in Milton's "mould" to suggest at one and the same time a number of significances: firstly, there is the momentum of the elephant's emergence--a momentum which is strong enough to break the soil into lumps. Secondly, there is the materiality of the beast's body; an understanding which sees the earthly mould as constituting the elephant's substance as well as its source or place of origin. Thirdly, in its significance as a casting mould, or pattern, "mould" suggests the perfection of the elephant's design and the skill and craftmanship of its Maker. This reading of "mould" also co-operates with that which understands the word to mean earth or soil to suggest the Platonic theory of Forms. The material of the beast's body, its earthy "mould", is "moulded" into the shape of an elephant like wax beneath a seal.

This process is a total manifestation of the way in which the whole of Creation comes about, for in Milton's view, Creation, as we have seen, consists of the imposing of order and form, and, in particular of the Platonic Forms, upon the raw material of Chaos. When the Son returns to

Heaven, following His act of Creation, He contemplates the universe from His Throne, contemplating "how good, how fair" is is,

> Answering His great idea. (VII. 557)

Here, the word "idea" does not mean a casual thought which one day nonchalantly crossed the Creator's mind; the word is used in its Platonic sense as an eternally existing pattern or archetype of things, of which the individual things are imperfect copies, and from which they derive their existence. The Idea of Creation is the source of all things, and the pleasure which the Son takes in it is very similar to that taken by Plato's Creator in the fulfilment of his pattern in his own created universe:

> And when the Father that engendered it perceived it in motion and alive, a thing of joy to the eternal gods, He too rejoiced; and being well-pleased He designed to make it resemble its Model (ie. Idea) still more closely.[7]

The world "mould", when understood as "pattern", thus suggests that the elephant springs from a source outside itself, just as, on a much larger scale, the whole universe is built upon a divine model.

However, notwithstanding the parallels between Plato's theory and Milton's poetry, there are also certain significant differences of tone and value between them. For Plato, every material object is at best only a copy of its Form

or pattern. While it is good in that it is a reflection of that Form or pattern, the philosopher never allows us to forget that it is a reflection and no more. His emphasis is at least as much upon the distance between Form and reflection as it is upon their proximity to each other. For Plato, true knowledge (episteme) lies in turning away from the world of phenomena to the true world of Forms which is its source. Milton, on the other hand, is far more interested in the similarities between Forms and objects and between Heaven and earth, than he is in their differences. His word "mould", while it includes the meaning of "a pattern by which something is shaped", and so harmonizes with Plato's theory of Forms, also allows for the imagination to concretize the pattern itself, so that like the mould for a plaster casting, the pattern may be broken and cast aside in order that the object may appear. In short, whereas for Plato, objects are only a beginning for observation, and knowledge is gained only through contemplation of their Forms, Milton's imagination sees the objects themselves as the end of conscious observation, for they are the only places where the Forms are visible to us. Without material objects as vehicles for their expression, the Forms would be, at best, only impotent patterns of perfection.

Milton's materialistic Platonism may lay him open to the charge of philosophical inconsistency, or, at least, a misrepresentation of Plato's metaphysics, but this doesn't matter, for it provides him with some splendid opportunities

for poetic expression. The imagination of the poet or reader of poetry, unlike that of the philosopher, needs to rest upon particulars rather than abstractions. But because Milton is constantly asserting or implying that the particulars of his Creation are more than just that, the imagination of the reader or auditor is invited both to grasp what is before him and to perceive its ontological relationship with the Absolute. Milton the poet, far more than Plato the philosopher, enjoys the best of both worlds.

It should be stressed that belief in any metaphysical reality is quite unnecessary for the reader or auditor to respond to Milton's poetic craftmanship. Milton's modified version of Platonism rarely intrudes upon the poetry as a doctrine, and the poet never demands that we place faith in it (as he does demand that we place faith in Christianity) in order that the particular moments where it is discernible may have their full poetic effect. As with the word "mould" in the description of the elephant's creation, Milton's belief in divine patterns for particular objects is unobtrusive and often passes unnoticed. But it does, even without our being aware of its existence or presence in any one moment, serve to excite our wonder by presenting to our consciousness events, objects or phenomena which are at once tangible and intangible. That is, they are tangible in their presence and materiality, but mysterious in their origin, nature and significance.

We constantly feel that Milton's Creation in Paradise Lost

is there and not there; it seems to bridge the gap between Absolute and relative being. It seems to manifest more than its material existence, yet it does so through its material existence. Milton makes all this discernible even to those readers most sceptical as to any metaphysical existence, because he uses language, (itself the most suggestive of all artistic media), to constantly focus a plurality of tones or meanings upon the various objects, beings and events in his Creation.

We have seen how, in the one word "mould", Milton suggests both the force of the elephant's emergence, which breaks the earth into lumps, and the intricacy and beauty of its design, which has been "moulded" by a Master Craftsman. Yet the word's richness may be explored further still, and explored in such a way as to related this one moment of Creation to the expression of God's Providence through the Resurrection itself.

"Mould", in addition to the meanings I have outlined above, also contains this significance:

> The 'dust' to which a human body 'returns' after death; the ashes of the dead. (O.E.D. 5b1.4c)

This use of the word, now obsolete, was employed by George Sandys, for example in 1638:

> ..Though wormes devoure mee, though I turn to mold.

We cannot be sure that Milton thought of "mould" in this sense in the context of Creation, for the word was used of

dead flesh metaphorically, in so far as the body was thought of as being composed of earth. But if Milton did think of "mould" in this sense, there is a gentle irony in the elephant's being drawn from it, for it is there that the beast will one day return. This relationship between the perfected creature and its substance is, like that between the elephant's "pattern" and material, paralleled by the Creation as a whole. Just as the elephant is shaped by a patterning mould, and the Creation consists of the imprinting of God's "great Idea" upon the raw material of Chaos, so that very material of Chaos which bears the divine imprint is

> The Womb of nature and perhaps her Grave (II. 911)

The earthy mould whence the elephant appears, is certainly its womb, and if we understand "mould" to mean dead flesh, it is also, by implication, the creature's eventual grave. Yet there is no sense of overshadowing doom here, rather the emphasis is placed upon God's power to derive life from death, to bring forth a living creature from what is, in essence, the stuff of physical corruption. If I am correct in discerning the implication of death in "mould", then it is possible to see the Creation in Paradise Lost as a kind of prefiguring of the Resurrection and the Resurrection as a fulfilment of Creation.

Here, the correspondence between the Creation and Christ's Redemptive Mission, if such a correspondence exists at all, is hinted at only with the greatest perfunctoriness.

Elsewhere, however, the movements of the parts of Creation exhibit a remarkable applicability to the destiny of Man following the Fall. Of particular note is the gathering of the waters into one place:

> as Armies at the call/Of Trumpet (For of Armies thou hast Heard)
> Troop to thir Standard, so the watrie throng,
> Wave rowling after Wave, where way they found
> If steep, with torrent rapture, if through Plaine,
> Soft-ebbing; nor withstood them Rock or Hill,
> But they, or underground, or circuit wide
> With Serpent errour wandring, found thir way.
>
> (VII. 295-302)

In his 1966 edition of Milton's Poetical works, Douglas Bush glosses "Serpent errour" as "winding". Merritt Y. Hughes in his 1957 edition of Milton's Complète Poems and Major Prose glosses the line with the word "meandering", adding the bracketed comment "(in serpentine coils)". Certainly the phrase "Serpent Errour" does describe the movement of the waters in this way, but its presence in a poem which tells of Man's seduction by "th'infernal Serpent" (I. 34) should perhaps command more attention or comment than either Bush or Hughes bestow upon it. Not only "serpent" but "errour" itself is a loaded word in this poem. In seventeenth century English, "errour" meant not just a "meandering" or a "mistake";it could also mean "sin". The physical description of Milton's Sin in book II is directly drawn

from Spenser's Enour in the Faerie Queene; a character whose significance, no less than her appearance, closely parallels that of Milton's allegorical personage. When "serpent" and "enour" are juxtaposed, therefore, it seems unlikely in the extreme that only the meandering of waters is intended to engage our attention.

Stanley Fish, in his slender but impressive critical work, Surprised by Sin, quotes this passage to support his thesis that Milton deliberately confronts the reader of the poem with his own status as a fallen man. Fish argues that Milton describes the innocent movements of an undefiled Creation in language calculated to awaken the reader to his own defilement as a fallen man and his consequent inability to comprehend the beauty of the unfallen world, or anything else, in isolation from his own corrupted condition:

> By confronting the reader with a vocabulary bearing a taint of sin in a situation that could not possibly harbour it, Milton leaves him no choice but to acknowledge himself as the source, and to lament.[8]

While I do not challenge Fish's argument that the waters themselves are untainted by sin, I do believe that there is a closer relationship between this passage and the history and destiny of Man than he allows for. What is explicitly described here is the "kindly enclyning" which draws all the waters of the world together so as to create

seas, rivers and lakes and discover the dry land. This Creative act is, like the beginning of Light from darkness, or the drawing of vegetation and animal life from the earth, an exercise of Providence and mercy. Yet the process is described in such a way as to bring to mind the still greater Providence and mercy which are to be extended to Man once fallen. The words "with Serpent error wand'ring" may be completely free of any suggestion of sin when applied to the waters, but when applied to Man, they are unambiguously applicable to the Fall.

It might be contended that the passage does not refer to Man and that the correspondence I am arguing for does not exist outside my own imagination, but by examining the verbal and ideational applicability of these lines to the poem's thesis of "eternal Providence", I believe I can show that the correspondence is too close to be accidental.
First of all, the whole passage is framed by a simile which is not only anthropomorphic, but describes an activity which only came into practice among human beings following the Fall. This activity is the waging of war. The waters come together "as Armies at the call/of Trumpet". I do not mean to suggest that the likening of the waters to warring armies imputes any degree of sin to the prelapsarian universe. Quite the contrary, Milton through Raphael, takes care to prevent any such misunderstanding of the gathering of the waters by adding the guiding parenthesis "for of Armies thou hast heard".

Raphael is here alluding to his earlier account of the War in Heaven, in which the numbers of battling armies had been compared to the numerous flocks of birds which had come to Adam to offer him their allegiance and receive their names:

> high above the ground
> Thir march was, and the passive Air upbore
> Thir nimble tread; as when the total kind
> Of birds, in orderly array, on wing
> Came summoned over Eden to receive
> Thir names of thee. (VI. 71-6)

For Adam, who has never seen an army, the movement of the waters is like the flocking of the birds. The simile which had enabled him to picture armies in the earlier book is called upon by Raphael now, so that Adam may picture the gathering of the waters. For the reader of the poem, however, the guiding parenthesis "for of Armies thou hast heard" is unnecessary. We do not need to recall the earlier simile in order to comprehend this one; for us the image of armies is sufficient in itself. In part, this strengthens Fish's argument that the purpose of the passage is to confront the reader with his own status as a fallen man, for we are made to realize that our language, like our experience, is different from that of prelapsarian Man.

But this is only a part of the passage's significance. The very fact that we are familiar with armies and Adam is not, enables us, as fallen men, to read the simile backwards. Any simile which likens object or event A to object or event B,

must also liken object or event B to A. If the gathering of the waters is like the gathering of armies, then the gathering of armies must bear some resemblance to the gathering of waters. Consequently, the merciful Providence which draws the waters together and causes them to flow into one place by "kindly enclyning", is, by inference, also extended to men, and, what is more, extended even to the most sinful of men, men who are experienced in the shedding of each other's blood. Thus the employment of a vocabulary of sin to describe "a situation that could not possibly harbour it", far from imputing sin to the sinless, imputes mercy and Providence to the sinful.

Fish is not incorrect in his analysis of the passage, but he misses the central point. The very Creative and Providential energy which causes insentient and sinless matter to conglomerate into the Forms most propitious for the Fulfilment of God's "great Idea", is not less but more available to Man than to other parts of the universe.

Let us look again at the passage, this time in closer detail. Raphael begins by likening the gathering of the waters to the mustering of "Armies at the call/Of Trumpet". The military image continues as we are told that the waters "Troop to thir standard", "Wave rowling after Wave". The word "wave" operates beautifully here to turn the image upside down, imperceptibly perplexing the roles of subject and figure. The ambiguity lies in the fact that "wave" can either be understood literally as waves of water or

metaphorically, (continuing the simile), as waves of an army. The simile contains a metaphor the figure of which is the simile's own subject. The effect is thus unlike that of other epic similes in that the figure is not held at a distance and contemplated in relation (and contrast) to the subject; it is drawn into the picture so that it becomes part of the subject itself.

Thus the movement of the waters is so anthropomorphized as to suggest that not only waves but men are gathered together and bidden to rise. Milton's vocabulary continues in an anthropomorphizing vein through the following lines which complete the description of this episode in the Creation:

> the great receptacle
> Of congregated Waters he call'd Seas. (VII 307-8)

The word "congregated" keeps its Latin meaning "to collect into a flock or herd" or, less specifically, "to assemble",[9] and thus, on one level, refers simply to the waters. But in an age so conscious of theological issues as that of Milton, the word "congregated" would surely have also brought to the mind of the reader or auditor of the poem its contemporary significance as a congregation of believers. This meaning is only secondary and is excluded by the strict literal sense of the line, but it presents itself to our consciousness nevertheless. Indeed, its presence is sufficient to re-channel the direction of the preceeding simile and throw back upon it a significance which, in the moment of its

reading, had not been apparent. Initially, the simile had seemed to compare the flowing of the waters to the marching of an army, but now the trumpet which drew the "watrie throng" together, seems, in retrospect, to have been the trumpet of the Archangel which, on the Last Day shall summon the living and dead to gather for Judgement. The gathering of the waters into one place seems like the gathering of the just into a single congregation. Milton is describing the act of Creation, but through that description, he is also revealing the Providence of God which, as his vocabulary suggests, finds its greatest fulfilment, not in the shaping of inanimate nature, but in the Grace which is offered to Man.

How then, does the line "With Serpent errour wand'ring, found thir way" relate to this? I have argued above that "Serpent errour" is indeed intended to make us think of the Fall, but this does not mean that evil overshadows the Creation in its making. Such evil as there is, applies only to men; the rivers themselves are wholly sinless and pure in their nature and movements. Fish concludes from this that Milton's intent is to confront the reader or auditor with his own corruption by original sin. But does the line, when taken as a whole, have a dark or melancholy significance? The statement is, that the rivers, after wandering "with Serpent errour", "found thir way". These final three words, all of which are monosyllables and therefore have a decelerating effect upon the line leading to greater emphasis

seem to me to work against rather than with the preceding words.

There are two contrasting pictures: the first, of circuitous, roundabout and devious motion, the second of straight, economical linear motion. The rivers seem to find their way in spite of wandering "with Serpent errour" rather than because of so doing.

Fish, for all his subtlety of perception as regards the word "wand'ring", fails to fully recognize the contrasting significance of "way" and thus fails to appreciate the collision between the words. I have so far used the word "collision" to describe the relationship between "wand'ring" and "way", but this is perhaps dangerous, since it carries a false suggestion. It would be more accurate to say that a way is "traced through" or "drawn from" the "wand'ring" than it would be to say that the one collides with the other. It is as if the reader of the poem discovers that what had appeared to him at first as meandering and undirected motion is, in fact, guided and purposeful. The "way" does not so much conquer the "wand'ring" as it accomodates it to its own pattern. Thus, in the case of waters, their finding a way through their obstacles is inevitable, although they must wander in order to do so. There is no suggestion of sin with regard to the waters' movements, and, in fact, the very complexity of their pattern lends beauty to the whole. But when the words "With Serpent errour wandring, found thir way" are translated into the plane of human

activity, the relation between "wand'ring" and "way" undergoes a change. The "way" still weaves the "wand'ring" into its own pattern, but now it is the accommodation of Original Sin into the larger pattern of Providence and Grace.

CHAPTER THREE: THE FALL AND GOD'S PROVIDENCE

The words "With Serpent errour wandring, found thir way", which in book VII suggests a parallel between the gathering of the waters at the Creation and the gathering of the souls of the saved, are part of a large lexical pattern which runs throughout the whole of Paradise Lost and reflects the collision between the poem's argument and its thesis. The argument of Paradise Lost, the Fall of Man, is presented in terms which suggest that the Fall consists of Man's being led by Satan into a labyrinth of deceit. Structurally the whole poem may be seen as a maze leading inwards to the Fall and centring upon Man's acknowledgement of his guilt. But Milton has also revealed a way out of the labyrinth, a way which is discovered by the lexical evolution of the word "way" itself. The relationship between the argument and thesis of the poem is like that which exists between its images of the labyrinth and the way, for these images are emblems of the Fall and God's Providence respectively.

I have divided this chapter into two sections. In the first I shall look at images of wandering, in particular, of wandering through a labyrinth, whilst in the second I shall examine the unfolding of the way of Providence.

(I). In Wandring Mazes Lost

Everybody who has read Paradise Lost remembers this line from

book II. In his excellent critical work Surprised by Sin, Stanley Fish employed it as a title--heading for one of his chapter sections.[1] I have chosen to follow him in this, partly because the words are so appropriate, but partly also because my understanding of the lexical pattern built around "wandring" is somewhat different from that of Fish and I wish to challenge him. For Fish, the melancholy or pejorative overtones of "wander" and "wandring" are designed to confront the reader with his own sinfulness as a fallen man. In this, I partly agree with him, but he has, I think, underestimated the significance of "way", a word which his book ignores. Milton does not lead his reader into a labyrinth in order to leave him there, but in order to reveal to him the only way to Salvation. The word "wander" is not so much misunderstood in the poem as it is fought over. Unlike "way", it has no objective meaning which can be revealed or concealed, but is in itself neutral, lending itself to both innocence and guilt.

Speculation as to possible sources for Milton's labyrinth image is of only limited value since it is what Milton has himself made of the image which should really interest us. But there are two places where this image appears and is described in terms very similar to those employed by Milton. Both literary works antedate Paradise Lost, and both were certainly known to him. I shall look briefly at them now, in order to more closely define Milton's own uses of

"wandring" and "way".

The first is a description of Daedalus' carving of the labyrinth of Knossos in book VI of the Aeneid:

> hic labor ille domus, et inextricabilis error;
> magnum reginae sed enim miseratus amorem
> Daedalus ipse dolos tecti ambagesque resolvit,
> caeca regens filo vestigia. (VI 27-30)
> (Next came that winding, wearying, hopeless house;
> but Daedalus pitied a princess lost for love
> and solved the riddle and puzzle of those halls,
> with thread to guide blind feet).

Lexically, Virgil's labyrinth corresponds with the Creation as sung of in Iopas' song in book I. There, Iopas had sung of the wandering moon ("errantem lunam") and the toiling stars ("solisque labores"). Now, once again, these words appear as "labor" and "error". For Virgil, the world, no less than Daedalus' labyrinth, is a place of toil and aimless wandering. The meanings of the words, as well as the words themselves, coincide. In Paradise Lost, however, this equation is challenged. There is a difference between the wanderings of Satan and the wandering movements of the Creation. The rivers of books IV and VII may, as we have seen, wander with "Mazie" or "Serpent errour", but they are not aimless or toilsome. When the speculations of the fallen angels in book II, however, find

> no end, in wandring mazes lost (II. 561)

the line's meaning, as well as its vocabulary, is despairing.

Whereas for the stoic Virgil, words such as "labor" and "error" describe a truth about the universe, indicating its vastness and inclemency to human endeavour, for the Christian Milton, "errour", "wandring", "maze" and "labyrinth" are all applicable to life divorced from God, but they do not necessarily indicate such loss and isolation.

The second parallel to and possible influence upon Milton's labyrinth imagery and recurrent vocabulary of aberration and wandering, is to be found in Francis Quarles' Emblemes, published in 1633. Quarles' Emblemes was among the most popular books of the seventeenth century, selling over 300,000 copies in 1633 and another 400,000 in 1634. Milton would certainly have been familiar with the work. The Emblemes consists of a series of woodcuts, each entitled with a brief quotation from Scripture and accompanied by a short poem composed by Quarles. The concept behind the work was that contemplation of the emblems or hieroglyphs and their accompanying quotations and verses, would lead to the moral improvement of the reader.

The particular emblem relevant to Milton's maze imagery, I have reproduced below (pp. 156-7). It is suffixed by a quotation from Psalm 119 which reads as follows:

> O that my ways were directed to keep
> thy Statutes!

The emblem depicts a figure robed as a pilgrim, bearing a

II.

Oh that my wayes were directed to keep thy ſtatutes. pſal. 119.5

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II.

PSALM 119.5.

O that my ways were directed to keep thy Statutes!

1

THus I, the object of the worlds diſdain,
With Pilgrim pace ſurround the weary earth:
I only reliſh what the world counts vain;
Her mirth's my grief, her ſullen grief my mirth;
Her light my darkneſs; and her truth my errour:
Her freedom is my Gaol; and her delight my terrour.

2

Fond earth! proportion not my ſeeming love
To my long ſtay; let not thy thoughts deceive thee;
Thou art my priſon and my home's above;
My life's a preparation but to leave thee:
Like one that ſeeks a door, I walk about thee:
With thee I cannot live; I cannot live without thee.

3

The world's a lab'rinth, whoſe anfractuous ways
Are all compos'd of rubs and crook'd Meanders:
No reſting here; He's hurried back that ſtays
A thought; and he that goes unguided wanders:
Her way is dark, her path untrod, unev'n;
So hard's the way from earth; ſo hard's the way to Heaven.

4

This gyring lab'rinth is betrench'd about
On either hand with ſtreams of ſulph'rous fire,
Streams cloſely ſliding, erring in and out,
But ſeeming pleaſant to the fond deſcrier;
Where if his footſteps truſt their own invention,
He falls without redreſs, and ſinks without dimenſion.

Where

Figure 1a

5

Where ſhall I ſeek a Guide? where ſhall I meet
Some luckly hand to lead my trembling paces?
What truſty Lanthorn will direct my feet
To ſcape the danger of theſe dang'rous places?
What hopes have I to paſs without a Guide;
Where one gets ſafely through, a thouſand fall beſide.

6

An unrequeſted Star, did gently ſlide
Before the Wiſe-men to a greater Light;
Back-ſliding Iſr'el found a double Guide;
A Pillar, and a Cloud; by Day, by Night:
Yet in my deſp'rate dangers which be far
More great than theirs, I have no Pillar, Cloud, nor Star.

7

O that the pinions of a clipping Dove
Would cut my paſſage through the empty Air;
Mine eyes being ſeal'd, how would I mount above
The reach of danger and forgotten care!
My backward eyes ſhould ne'er commit that fault,
Whoſe laſting guilt ſhould build a monument of *Salt*.

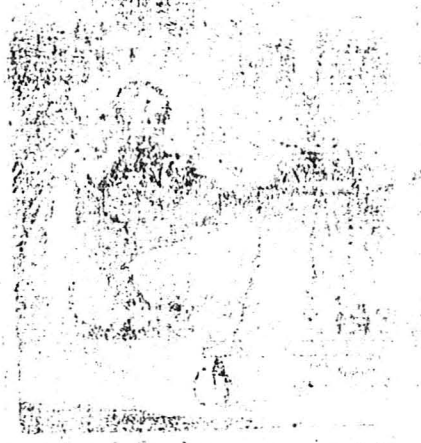
8

Great God that art the flowing Spring of Light,
Enrich mine eyes with thy refulgent Ray:
Thou art my Path; direct my ſteps aright;
I have no other Light, no other Way:
I'll truſt my God, and him alone purſue;
His Law ſhall be my Path; his Heavenly Light my Clue.

S. AUGUST.

S. AUGUST. Soliloqu. cap. 4.

O Lord; who art the Light, the Way, the Truth, the Life; in whom there is no darkneſs, errour, vanity nor death: the Light, without which there is darkneſs; the Way, without which there is wandring; the truth, without which there is errour; the life, without which there is death: Say, Lord, let there be light, and I ſhall ſee Light, and eſchew darkneſs; I ſhall ſee the way, and avoid wandring; I ſhall ſee the truth, and ſhun error; I ſhall ſee Life, and eſcape Death: Illuminate, O illuminate my blind Soul, which ſitteth in darkneſs, and the ſhadow of death; and direct my feet in the way of peace.



EPIG. 2.

Pilgrim trudge on: what makes thy ſoul complain
Crowns thy complaint. The way to reſt is pain:
The road to reſolution lies by doubt:
The next way home's the fartheſt way about.

Figure 1b

staff and wide-brimmed hat, who stands at the centre of a kind of maze or labyrinth. This labyrinth is unlike most others, however, in that its travellers do not walk through the corridors, but stride upon the top of its circuitous walls. Thus they risk not only losing their way, but also are in danger of losing their footing and plummeting downwards into the pit which always surrounds them. The flailing limbs of two such unfortunate wayfarers are discernible in the outerskirts of the maze. A third traveller is in the middle-background, apparently walking (or being walked by) what appears to be a dog, whilst he feels his own way with a staff. The central figure clasps a rope of some kind which is held at the far end by an angel who stands in a lighthouse. The pilgrim's gaze is set upon the tower as if this were his destination. The labyrinth is enclosed within a still higher wall, through which there is only one visible portal. This gate leads to the lighthouse via a meandering road which climbs a hill. Two more figures may be discerned upon the hillside, one endeavouring to clamber up its sheer slopes, the other sprawling or bowing in the pathway. The encircling wall is enclosed by a ring of trees, while in the distant background is a sea with ships upon it.

From reading Quarles' poem (reproduced with the emblem above) it becomes clear that the labyrinth represents the earth, while the lighthouse signifies Heaven. The poem is written as if by the pilgrim. The world is spoken of as

the pilgrim's enemy. Its light is his darkness, its truth, his "errour". "Errour", here, presumably has a double sense as both "mistake" and "wandering". The suggestion of wandering continues in the second stanza, where the pilgrim says he is "Like one that seeks a door". It is not until the third stanza, however, that the image is confirmed as the pilgrim declares "The world's a lab'rinth". This stanza is very rich in language reminiscent of Paradise Lost:

> he that goes unguided wanders:
> Her way is dark, her path untrod, unev'n;
> So hard's the way from earth; so hard's the way
> to Heaven.

I shall shortly examine the ideas of guiding and wandering in Milton's epic. The final line of this stanza bears resemblance to Satan's statement in book II that "long is the way/And hard that out of Hell leads up to light" (II. 433). In his next stanza Quarles declares that "This gyring lab'rinth is betrench'd about/On either hand with streams of sulph'rous fire". Now it is clear why the labyrinth in the picture is inverted. The circuitous ways of the raised pathway constitute the world, but before, behind and to either side, lies the ever-threatening fiery pit of Hell.

Quarles' poem is followed by a prose paragraph which is still more reminiscent of Milton's vocabulary in Paradise Lost. Throughout the paragraph (also reproduced in this

thesis) the words "way" and "wandring" are contrasted as they are in the passage quoted above from book VII of Paradise Lost and elsewhere in Milton's poem. Christ Himself is identified as the "way", as Quarles quotes Christ's own identification of Himself as "the Way, the Truth, the Life". To these three attributes or identities, Quarles adds a fourth --that of Light. Christ is "the Light, without which there is darkness; the Way, without which there is wandring". The identification of Christ with Light does more than just suggest that he is a luminary to guide one's way, it also looks back to the Creation, when God called Light out of darkness. Quarles thus implores Christ to illumine his way in language quoted directly from the Creation story in Genesis:

> Say, Lord, let there be light, and I shall see
> Light, and eschew darkness; I shall see the way,
> and avoid wandring.

When, in book XII of Paradise Lost, Michael reveals to Adam the miracle of Christ's Incarnation and the justification of Mankind, Adam also makes the connection between God's Grace and the Creation:

> O goodness infinite, goodness immense!
> That all this good of evil shall produce,
> And evil turn to good; more wonderful
> Than that which by creation first brought forth
> Light out of darkness! (XII 469-73)

It is with respect to the tension between the words "wandring" and "way", however, that the greatest similarity between

Quarles' work and that of Milton may be found.

Throughout the first two books of Paradise Lost, the words "wander" and "wandring" recur to describe the fallen angels. In each instance the word is both pejorative and melancholy, suggesting both the lawlessness and hopelessness of the rebel angels' cause. The rebel angels are allowed to wander at large, but in wandering they also remove themselves from the protection of a guided way. They think that their wandering at large defies the Will of God, but as with the wandering stars on the wandering rivers of Eden, their aberrations are regular, "then most, when irregular they seem":

> Nor had they yet among the Sons of Eve
> Got them new Names, till wandring o'er the Earth,
> Through God's high sufferance for the trial of man,
> By falsities and lies the greatest part
> Of Mankind they corrupted. (I. 364-8)

Fish describes this instance of "wandring" (the first in the poem) as follows:

> wandering signifies undirected movement, but the fallen angels wander through God's high sufferance; even their aimlessness is not their own. One cannot help but serve God.[2]

Fish is correct in discerning the suggestion that a way is to be drawn from the fallen angels' wanderings, but this "wandring" is not like those which are to occur later in

Milton's descriptions of Creation. The fallen angels may be unable to wander from God's Will, but they do endeavour to do so. This "wandring" is not innocent, though it is futile. When, a little later, Milton speaks of the Egyptians' "wandring Gods disguis'd in brutish forms/Rather than human" (I. 481-2), "wandring" has a literal meaning of "itinerant", meaning that the Israelites worshipped the Egyptian bull god Apis (the golden calf of Exodus) while they wandered in the desert. But also present in "wand'ring" is the sense of straying from the straight and narrow path of God's law. The word has this meaning once again when Milton describes the activities of profligates in the fallen world:

> when Night
> Darkens the Streets, then wander forth the Sons
> Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine. (I. 500-2)

Wandering, for the fallen angels, is both guilty and indicative of their isolation in the universe. Satan and his followers are doomed to an eternity of wandering, and all their attempts to avenge themselves upon God, like their speculations as to His Providence, are destined to find

> no end, in wand'ring mazes lost. (II. 361)

The vengeance of the fallen angels does not consist of forcing a way out of Hell, but of drawing Mankind into their own wandering maze.

The word "wandring" when used of Satan and his followers, always has a melancholy or pejorative tone. But it does not have this significance for the unfallen angels.

When in book III, Satan seeks somebody "who might direct his wand'ring flight/To Paradise" (III 631-2) he approaches Uriel and, disguised as a "stripling Cherub" states that his purpose springs from

> Unspeakable desire to see, and know
> All these his wondrous works, but chiefly Man,
> His chief delight and favor, him for whom
> All these his works so wondrous he ordain'd,
> Hath brought me from the Choirs of Cherubim
> Along thus wand'ring. (III. 663-7)

The reader, having only encountered "wand'ring", so far, as a negative word, at once recognizes the tone of loss and isolation characteristic of Satan. He sees at once that the word (like the disguised Satan) is a wolf in sheep's clothing. Uriel, however, fails completely to discern anything ominous in Satan's vocabulary. His innocence causes him to hear Satan's words innocently, and he understands "wand'ring" to mean nothing more than "roaming". Fish concludes from this that Milton's purpose is to confront the reader with his own sinfulness as a fallen man. Although we are able to recognize the speech of an errant being while Uriel is not, this only shows that "it takes one to know one."[3] This is brilliant criticism. But the reader is not only confronted with his own status as a fallen man in the moment of his reading, he is also confronted with the beginnings of what is to be a struggle, throughout the poem, for the word "wander". "Wander" and "wand'ring" are fought over by the

forces of good and evil in the poem, often, as here, without either side being aware that the struggle is taking place. It is even possible that Uriel hears in place of Satan's "wand'ring" its near homophone "wond'ring". The words may wel have sounded very similar in the seventeenth century. The word "wondrous" appears twice in the four lines before that in which "wand'ring" occurs and certainly colours the word "wandring" even if it does not facilitate the reading of it as "wond'ring". The proximity of "wand'ring" to "wondrous" may be accidental, but these words are to be placed close to each other again in places where they exert a force upon each other.

In book VIII, when the astronomical speculations of the still unfallen Adam are checked by Raphael, Adam connects a predilection for wandering in himself with these words:

> How fully hast thou satisfi'd me, pure
> Intelligence of Heav'n, Angel serene,
> And freed from intricacies, taught to live
> The easiest way, nor with perplexing thoughts
> To interrupt the sweet of Life, from which
> God hath bid dwell far off all anxious cares,
> And not molest us, unless we ourselves
> Seek them with wandring thoughts, and notions vain.
> But apt the Mind or Fancy is to rove.
> Uncheckt, and of her roving is no end. (VIII 180-89)

With Raphael's guidance, Adam has traced a way through and out of the labyrinth of his own curiosity. Here, as in the

exchange between Satan and Uriel, "wandring" could be read as "wondring", but Adam does not mean "wondering", for his very argument is that excessive wonder should not be given to things which do not concern one. Adam recognizes "wandring thoughts" for what they are and dismisses them. Uriel, howeve is led by his own innocence into understanding Satan's "wandring" innocently, or even hearing "wondring" for "wandring". This also would be innocent, for wonder is a valid and proper response to God's Creation so long as it does not cause one to wander from one's proper place in the universe.

Just as there is a battle over the word "wander" and a possibility of confusing "wander" with "wonder", there is a similar battle for "maze" and a possibility of confusing "maze" with "amaze". The mazes in which the speculating fallen angels lose themselves in book II are emblematic of hopelessness and despair. So are the mazes I shall shortly look at in books IX and X. But the rivers of Eden more "With Mazie errour under pendant shades" (V. 239). "Maze", like "wander", has both innocent and guilty opertions. It is difficult to ascertain a close relationship between "wonder" and "wander", since the only demonstrable kinship between the words is their similarity in appearance and sound. Ultimately, any instances of possible plays between the words must stand or fall by their own convincingness or lack of it. With "maze" and "amaze", on the other hand, it is possible to speak more authoritatively, since the words are related.

The O.E.D., in addition to defining "maze" as a "labyrinth" (O.E.D. 5b 4) also defines it as "a state of bewilderment" (O.E.D. 5b 3) and adds under this definition the statement that "in early examples it is uncertain whether a maze or AMAZE is intended." But the clearest authority I can cite for the consanguinity of "maze" and "amaze" and Milton's awareness of it, is this definition of "maze" in the dictionary of Edward Phillips, Milton's nephew:

> Maze: an astonishment, also the same as labyrinth.[3]

This definition is so concise that I do not shrink to offer it as conclusive proof that Milton was at least aware of the potential of "maze" and "amaze" as material for wordplay, and I hope to show that in many places in Paradise Lost this potential has been actualized.

I do not mean to suggest that the connotations of the words "wonder" and "amaze" are always good while those of "wander" and "maze" are always bad. All four words appear in a variety of contexts and elicit a variety of responses from the reader or auditor of the poem. Feelings of wonder and amazement are by no means a pejorative limited to unfallen Man and the good angels, and while God's Providence may be the greatest single inspiration of admiration and wonder in the poem, it is by no means the only thing to arouse such a response. Similarly, as we have seen in the cases of the "wand'ring fires" of Heaven and the rivers which "wander" with "Serpent" or "mazie errour", circuitous motion does

not always signify confinement in a maze and the hopelessness and despair of the lost.

Yet notwithstanding this important qualification, I hope, nevertheless, to be able to show that whilst neither wondering nor wandering, neither amazement nor the movements proper to a maze, are limited to any characters or groups of characters according to their moral status, the intimacy with which the different characters experience or understand the poem's marvels and movements, is determined by their moral status.

Put briefly, the distinction would seem to be as follows: whereas Satan and his followers seem always to have an intuitive understanding of the potentially dark significance of aberrant motion, the good angels in their speeches, and the Creation in its movements, seem to be quite innocent of any such knowledge or attributes. In the case of wonder and astonishment, however, the greater cognizance lies with the characters of superior moral status. Although Satan and the rebel angels wonder frequently, their wonder is always directed at something they can never fully know or understand, and which either promises always to remain alien to them, or else poses a direct threat. In short, wonder for Satan and his angels is inseparable from either jealousy or fear. Wonder and admiration for the good angels, on the other hand, consists of the operation of a participating as opposed to an alienated consciousness. Their wonder is characterized by recognition and joy and more often than not, is accompanied by song.

It will probably have been noticed that in the above paragraph, I have made no mention of either Adam or Eve or the reader of the poem. This is because Adam and Eve display different characteristics after the Fall to those they had displayed before it. The kind of wonder and astonishment they experience and the physical and spiritual wanderings they execute, change and develop through the course of the poem. It is possible to discern four major phases of this development. First of all, there is the period of prelapsarian innocence, glimpsed or described in books IV through VIII. In this phase, Adam's and Eve's wonder is of the angelic kind; joyful, participating and creative of song. The second, and briefest phase, takes place in the lines directly leading up to the Temptation in book IX. In this phase, the words "wonder" and "amaze" and their variants seem to span precariously the gap which separates them from "wander" and "maze" as Adam and Eve hover between the angelic and Satanic kinds of consciousness. The richest word-play on these words occurs in this phase. The third phase commences with Eve's return to Adam in book IX and lasts until their reconciliation and prayers for pardon in book X. In this phase Adam's and Eve's wonder and astonishment are wholly of the Satanic kind. In the fourth and final phase, which occupies the final two books of the poem, human wondering and wandering achieve a partial recovery, and whilst it is not actually reached (it can never be so until the end of the world) an

exit to the maze of Satan's making is perceived.

My central hypothesis as regards the words "wander", "wonder", "maze" and "amaze" is that they constitute a further battle-ground for the universal conflict between God and Satan and the specific collison between the thesis and argument of Paradise Lost. Language is not taken for granted as a fixed medium for expression in Paradise Lost, but words themselves are fought over and have different meanings for different characters at different times. The words shed or accrue significances and adopt different tones within their wide spectrums of action to suit the circumstances in which they appear. As the reader of Paradise Lost encounters now one aspect or operation of a word, now another, he grows in an experiential context. This growth is of two kinds. First of all, in observing how words can have different meanings when used of or by different characters, he is able to witness the varying experiences in, and understandings of the universe available to those characters, and equipped with this knowledge, reach a fuller understanding of the characters themselves. Secondly, he is made aware also of his own expectations as to those words and so is made to confront his own understanding of the world and his own place in it. In part, as Fish argues, this understanding and location are those of a fallen man and the reader is thus

> confronted with evidence of his corruption and becomes aware of his inability to respond adequately to spiritual conceptions.[4]

But as the words change in meaning, this change is matched by a corresponding change in the reader's expectations, so that his understanding of Milton's language evolves in sympathy with the evolution of the language itself and he, no less than Milton's vocabulary, undergoes a "justification". This is achieved by the evocation of wonder and admiration in the reader, but that evocation itself is facilitated by the evolution of the poem's vocabulary.

As a starting point for illustration of the many points I have briefly enumerated above, I shall turn to the description, in book VIII, of Adam's first moments following his Creation. Adam describes his infancy to Raphael in these words:

> As new wak't from soundest sleep
> Soft on the flourie herb I found me laid
> In Balmie sweat, which with his Beams the Sun
> Soon dri'd, and on the reaning moisture fed.
> Strait toward Heav'n my wondring Eyes I turnd,
> And gaz'd a while the ample skie, till rais'd
> By quick instinctive motion up I sprung,
> As thitherward endevoring, and upright
> Stood on my feet; (VIII, 253-61)

It is beyond dispute that "wondring" in line 257 means what it says; if there is any trace or suggestion of "wandering" in "wondering", it is not enough to justify the description of the word as a pun. Milton's vocabulary and syntax would actually seem to exclude the possibility of reading "wandering" into "wondering", for the one thing that "wandering", in this

poem, never is, is "strait". Moreover, the syntactical compactness of "Strait torward Heav'n my wondring Eyes I turn'd" suggests a deliberateness and control quite incompatible with the undirected and erratic motion associated with "wandering". If the line had read "Strait toward Heav'n I turn'd my wondring Eyes", there might have been more room for the inclusion of a sense of chance, but by placing the main verb where he does, Milton emphasizes the intentionality of the gaze and causes "wondring" to be embraced within the completeness of the action. Yet this insistence upon the deliberateness, or, at least, compulsiveness of Adam's gaze, for the very reason that it denies the possibility of reading "wandering" into "wondering", calls "wandering" to mind and actually does so more effectively than if the word had indeed been a pun. Having been brought to the surface of our consciousness, "wondering" is kept there by the series of verbs which follow, all but one of which are verbs of motion and which together establish a pattern of upward movement of ever increasing effort and vigour until resolution is found in the words "upright stood on my feet." Into this sequence ("turn'd", "gaz'd", "rais'd", "sprung", "endevoring", "stood"), "wandering", as a verb of motion, fits more readily than does "wondring", and the effect of the whole is that "wondring" is caught in a kind of backwater and enriched with the sense of "wandering" in retrospect; a sense which, in the moment of its reading, had been denied it. This may not be enough to justify our calling "wondring" a pun, but it is enough to

create tension between the potential action of "wondring" as "wandering" and the construction "Straid....I turn'd". The suggestion is that, in Eden, "wandering" is "straight" and an action of purpose rather than of chance.

Yet even as they anticipate the movement of his body in wandering skywards, Adam's eyes are full of wonder, and it is this wonder which brings into being a flowing unity between himself and the objects of his vision and inspires him to seek and adore his Creator. "Wondring" does not, like most puns, focus two meanings upon a single word, rather it fuses two words into a single meaning, so that the action of raising the eyes and the sensation of wonderment become one and the same. Nowhere else in Paradise Lost do the words "wondring" and "wandering" exist in so close a harmony as they do here. It will be useful to compare this instance of "wondring" with an earlier example of "wander". I make the comparison, not because I think the two moments were necessarily connected as a pair in Milton's mind (after all, my own linking of them is performed with the help of a concordance, a tool which discovers correspondences after the act of composition) but because together they help to show the different kinds of knowledge and consciousness available to Adam and the fallen angels. This difference is there whether or not the specific words "wondring" and "wander" bring to mind the possibility of "wandring" and "wonder", but the entertaining of the possibility of such vocabular cross-reference seems to me to be illuminating nevertheless.

The instance of "wander" I have in mind, occurs in Belial's speech in the debate in Hell in book II. Belial is answering Moloch's advocat6on of a policy of martial resistance with the warning that extinction would be the likely outcome of such a course of action:

> Thus repuls'd, our final hope
> Is flat despair: we must exasperate
> Th'Almighty Victor to spend all his rage,
> And that must end us, that must be our cure,
> To be no more; sad cure; for who would loose,
> Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
> Those thoughts that wander through Eternity,
> To perish rather, swallow'd up and lost
> In the wide womb of uncreated night. (II. 142-50)

Even more than "wondring" in book VIII, Belial's "wander" excludes the possibility of a misreading of the word for its homophone. "Wander through" is a verb of motion and thus precludes the possibility of replacing "wander" with "wonder", for one who wonders, generally does so from a position of stationary observation or contemplation and almost always is said to "wonder at" something and is never said to "wonder through" it. Yet, as with "wondring" in book VIII, the context of the passage is such as to bring the alternative word to mind, even as it dismisses it. Belial is describing the operation of the angel's "intellectual being", and at first sight, "wonder" presents itself to the imagination as our intellectual activity more readily than "wander" does.

With "wonder" thus brought to our minds as a possibility, it is something of a disappointment to discover that "wander" and only "wander" is what is meant. It is as if the thoughts Belial values so highly were striving always to assume the ardour of wonderment but were constantly disappointed and made to look elsewhere. Of course, this is not how Belial intends to use "wander". He means the word to be understood in its neutral sense as describing itinerant perambulation, but the denial of wonder in his wandering thoughts provides a standard against which their wandering can be measured and so deprives "wander" of its neutrality. "Intellectual being" deprived of the capacity to wonder is tantamount to the banishment or even extinction of intellectual being, yet it is as a preferable alternative to extinction that Belial clings to his intellect. This irony is reflected in Milton's syntax, for the infinitive construction "To perish rather, swallowd up and lost/In the wide womb of uncreated night" can either be understood to refer to the fallen angels themselves, in which case "To perish" looks back to "we" in line 143, or it can be read as if it governed "Those thoughts". Belial, who wishes to contrast the worth of intellection with the waste of extinction, intends only the former meaning, but the proximity of "Those thoughts that wander..." to the following construction, makes tempting the reading "thoughts that wander through Eternity/To perish..." Understood thus, the wandering thoughts which Belial values so highly, like the speculations of his fellows at IL. 561, which find "no end, in wandring mazes lost" are doomed only

to be "swallowd up and lost/In the wide womb of uncreated night." The word "wander" has, in any case, already been used in a pejorative sense of Belial, in the previous book, when the poet introduced him thus:

> When Night/Darkness the streets, then wander forth
> the Sons
> Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.
> (I. 500-2)

Having read these lines, the reader of the poem is prepared to associate wandering with guilt whenever the word is used of Belial.

The difference between Belial's wandering thoughts and Adam's wondering gaze is that Belial never finds any object upon which he can rest his attention. His consciousness is doomed forever to wander through Eternity without ever finding the repose his mental lethargy desires. Adam, on the other hand, while he lacks the intellectual powers of even the fallen angels, and can behold Heaven only as a spectator, not as a traveller, is able, even in the simple act of looking, to create a bond between himself and the object of his observation. The syncopation of the preposition in the words "gaz'd a while the ample Skie", for example, reflects more than just the demands of metre. Milton could have reconciled grammatical and metrical claims by replacing "a while" with "upon", but this his actual choice of words is much better because it has the effect of seeming to bridge the incomputable distance

between Adam and the Heavens he beholds. It also suggests that the relationship between Adam and the firmament is like that which exists between a subject and an object in a sentence; Adam's beholding is felt to be performative rather than merely receptive and his very gaze seems to claim the Heavens as the source of his being.

Belial's wandering thoughts are devoid of wonder and so seem vain, but Adam's wonderment subsumes the suggestion of wandering in his gaze and makes wandering itself a kind of act of worship. As if to confirm this suggestion, Adam's physical movements immediately before the appearance to him of the "shape Divine" (VIII 295) in his dream are unambiguously those of a wanderer:

> thus I call'd, and stray'd I knew not whither
>
> (VIII 283)

Even after Adam's dream, in which he flies through the air "smooth sliding without step" (VIII 302), to alight in Paradise and discover "all real" (VIII 310) as he awakes, his wonder at his new surroundings leads at once to the desire to wander through them:

> there had new begun
> My wandring, had not hee who was my Guide
> Up hither, from among the Trees appeer'd
> Presence Divine. (VIII 311-4)

The wanderings of Adam's infancy do not represent a wandering away from divine guidance, for that guidance has not yet been given. Rather, his wandering, no less than his wondering

(here the words are almost interchangeable), constitutes a prayer for divine guidance. This prayer is answered as the "Guide" appears.

Eve's dream in book V provides an interesting comparison with Adam's dream in book VIII, for while both dreams are innocent, the inspirer of Adam's dream is God, while the inspirer of Eve's dream is Satan. In both dreams the dreamers fly through the air, but whereas Adam's flight is a real flight, and he awakes to discover that he has indeed been translated to Paradise, that of Eve is wholly illusory. Adam says of his awakening:

> I wak't, and found
> Before mine Eyes all real, as the dream
> Had lively shadowd. (VIII 309-11)

No sooner does he awake than the "Guide" of his dream appears before him. In Eve's case, however, her "Guide" disappears even before her dream is finished:

> Forthwith up to the Clouds
> With him I flew, and underneath beheld
> The Earth outstrecht immense, a prospect wide
> And various: wondring at my flight and change
> To this high exaltation; suddenly
> My Guide was gon, and I, me thought, sink down,
> And fell asleep; but O how glad I wak'd
> To find this but a dream! (V. 86-93)

Fortunately, this dream is (as yet) a dream and nothing more.

Milton stresses Eve's innocence. While she "wondring look't" (V. 54) upon the Tree of Knowledge, of Good and Evil, and wondered "at (her) flight and change", her wonder is true wonder and there is no suggestion that there is any "wandering" implicit in her "wondering". Her physical movements in the dream, can, however be described as a wandering, and what is more, as a wandering through a maze. But even here, her intended destination is at variance with her actual destination, and the reader of the poem is able to discern Satan's artifice:

> I rose as at thy call, but found thee not;
> To find thee I directed then my walk;
> And on, methought, alone I pan'd through ways
> That brought me on a sudden to the Tree
> Of interdicted Knowledge. (V. 48-52)

The "ways" which bring Eve "on a sudden" to the place Satan wishes to bring her to, are described in terms which make them seem like a labyrinth, although nowhere does Milton use this or any similar word. Eve's innocence prevents the walls of Satan's maze from crystallizing around her, and the paths through which she treads remain the avenues of Paradise. This is perhaps because her intention, unlike her intention in the actual temptation, is to find Adam. She directs her own walk (49) and does not, as then, choose at once to accept another as guide.

In the Temptation scene itself, the labyrinthine pathways which are only hinted at in the dream, find direct expression in rich simile and description which avails itself to the full

of the possible plays between "maze" and "amaze". I have looked briefly at this scene in my first chapter, as an example of what I there called the "false marvel". I return to it now in order to show how the falseness of Satan's apparent miracle of a beast endowed with speech works to ensnare Eve and perplex her as if she were lost in a maze.

In order to lead Eve into a maze of deceit, Satan must first himself enter the mazes of the serpent's body and hide there. Early in book IX he conceals himself in mist, for the purpose of prying

> In every Bush and Brake, where hap may finde
> The serpent sleeping, in whose mazie foulds
> To hide me, and the dark intent I bring. (IX. 160-2)

It is significant that Satan must enter a maze in order to lead Eve into one. His entering of the serpent's body and vitalizing it with the powers of speech, is, on one level, his most cunning trick and leads to his only success. But when we remember that the speculations of his followers as to God's Providence had, in book II, "found no end, in wandring Mazes lost" (II 561), Satan's entry into this maze assumes a new significance. He is entering a path that leads nowhere and which can ultimately achieve nothing but the confusion of his own strategy.

In addition to the specific image of a maze, the Temptation scene is rich in words which describe actions of leading, conducting and guiding. These words often co-operate with the image of the maze to suggest the tracing of a path

through the maze's intricacies, but they can also suggest the finding of the swiftest possible route to a destination. This ambiguity is of particular interest when one partner in a conversation uses the words with one significance, while the other employs the same word or words with a different meaning. Satan, whether in soliloquy or dialogue, generally uses the word "lead" and its variants to mean lead through a tortuous or complicated path, whereas the good angels and Adam and Eve used "lead" in the sense of indicating the shortest, easiest way. When, for example, in book IV, Satan first learns of the restriction placed by God upon the diet of Adam and Eve, he at once resolves to seduce them "to reject/Envious commands" and adds:

> But first with narrow search I must walk round
> This Garden, and no corner leave unspi'd:
> A chance but chance may lead where I may meet
> Some wandring Spirit of Heav'n. (IV. 528-31)

The paths which Satan chooses to follow, like those he leads others into, twist and turn like a maze through many corners. The "wandring Spirit" he hopes to meet, is one who wanders innocently "by Fountain side,/Or in thick shade" (IV. 531-2), but Satan's own wandering path is "narrow" and prys into every unexplored crevice. Just as Satan seeks a wandering angel "with narrow search" in the hope of winning information, it is "with narrow search" (IX 83) that he passes over the earth before deciding upon the serpent as fittest vessle for his concealment. The labyrinth of the serpent's body and the

winding paths of Eden seem to correspond with each other as Satan effects his entry:

> So saying, through each thicket Danck or Drie,
> Like a black mist low creeping, he held on
> His midnight search, where soonest he might finde
> The Serpent: him fast sleeping soon he found
> In Labyrinth of many a round self-mould,
> His head the midst, well stor'd with subtle wiles.
>
> (IX 179-84)

Both the serpent and the paths of Eden are as yet innocent, but already Satan is beginning to make a labyrinth of Eden and to invest both serpent and garden with the secrecy and dread of the labyrinth of Greek mythology.

This is something which in Eden, at least, has not been seen before. When Raphael had visited Adam in book V, he had asked Adam to "lead" him to his bower, but the pathways there had then seemed straight and Adam's leading of the angel to be direct:

> Lead on then where thy Bowre
> Oreshades; for these mid-hours, til Eevning rise
> I have at will. (V. 373-7)

Satan's leading of Eve is to be indirect, drawing her through a maze of destruction, but Milton, before the Temptation itself, has added a scene in which Satan himself is temporarily led astray from his avowed purpose. This wandering takes the form of the wonder which Eve's innocence and beauty inspire in him:

her every Air
Of gesture or least action overawd
His Malice, and with rapine sweet bereau'd
His fierceness of the fierce intent it brought:
That space the Evil one abstracted stood
From his own evil, and for the time remain'd
Stupidly good, of enmity disarm'd,
Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge. (X. 439-66)

But only for a moment is Satan thus disorientated, and almost at once he regains control of his faculties, upbraiding himself for having swerved, however temporarily, from his design:

Thoughts, whither have ye led me, with what sweet
Compulsion thus transported to forget
What hither brought us, hate, not love, nor hope
OF Paradise for Hell, hope here to taste
OF pleasure, but all pleasure to destroy,
Save what is in destroying, other joy
To me is lost. (IX. 473-9)

The words "whither have ye led", "thus transported" and "hither brought" all describe physical movement, but physical movement of different kinds. Only "hither brought us" describes literal movement, the leading and transporting are figurative. Still, together the words form a lexical pattern of coming and going, which only finds resolution in the word "lost". The very shape of Satan's sentence, as it twists and turns with syntactical circuitousness, throwing up the same words over and over again ("hope", "pleasure", "destroy") resembles

the pattern of a maze, and like a maze, it concludes wearily with a confession of bereavement.

Nevertheless, Satan's recovery is complete and he proceeds to reaffirm his identity as master of the maze as he moves the labyrinthine body of the serpent toward Eve:

> So spake the Enemy of Mankind, enclos'd
> In serpent, Inmate bad, and toward Eve
> Address'd his way, not with indented wave,
> Prone on the ground, as since, but on his rear,
> Circular base of rising folds; that tow'r'd
> Fould above fould a surging Maze. (IX. 494-9)

The words "toward Eve/Address'd his way" carry an omninous suggestion of the directness of purpose which is concealed by the indirectness of the serpent's movements and speech. The same word "way" reappears to describe the effect of the serpent's initial eulogy of Eve's beauty:

> Into the heart of Eve his words made way,
> Though at the voice much marvelling; at length
> Not unamaz'd she thus in answer spake. (IX 550-2)

Part of the success of Satan's deception of Eve can be attributed to the fact that he insinuates his arguments into her heart by distracting her attention and attentiveness with the apparent marvel of "Language of Man pronounc't/By Tongue of Brute" (X 553-4). This drawing of Eve's attention to one aspect of what is before her (or seems to be before her) so as to diminish the attention she would otherwise bestow

upon the content of what she hears, operates like the alternate walks and pathways of a maze to guide her where Satan wishes her to be led. Her indiscriminate wonder causes her perception to encounter a blank wall, obliging her to turn and follow an oblique line of reasoning, in ignorance of the true way out of her bewilderment, which consists of faith in God and rational scrutiny of what only appears to be a miracle. The litotes "not unamaz'd" beautifully suggests the falsity of Satan's marvel, for the maze-like logic of the double negative awakes the potential action of "amaz'd" as "placed in a maze" to hint that beneath his inspiration of Eve's amazement, the serpent is leading her into a labyrinth of deceit.

Eve is "Yet more amaz'd" (IX. 614) when Satan had added lies to his praises and told her that his power of speech came from eating fruit from a tree. She asks the serpent where the tree may be found, thus enabling him, in his reply, to develop the implication he had first made in her dream in book V, that Eden is a labyrinth where all paths are bent:

> To whom the wilie Adder, blithe and glad,
> Empress, the way is readie, and not long,
> Beyond a row of Myrtles, on a Flat,
> Fast by a Fountain, one small Thicket past
> Of blowing Myrrh and Balme; if thou accept
> My conduct, I can bring the thither soon. (IX 625-30)

Milton is often criticized for the lack of specificity in his local descriptions. This short passage certainly fulfils most of the charges brought against the poet. It would be

impossible, for example, to draw a map from Satan's directions. But lack of specificity is the whole point in this case. The reader is not allowed to rest his attention upon any of the details but is led through them on the meandering path of Milton's syntax. The prepositions "on" and "fast by" lead us to expect that we have arrived, but then the phrase "one small Thicket past" moves us on further still and we are made to acknowledge that we do not know the way and must accept Satan's guidance. Even the nature of this guidance is, without Eve's knowledge, fought over in the vocabulary which passes between herself and the serpent. It is not leadership which Satan offers Eve (for that would be too forward) but "conduct". Her reply heightens our sense of tragedy, for it both reflects her still unspoiled innocence and suggests that Satan has come one step closer to destroying it. Her brief answer "Lead then" (IX. 631) has none of the intricacy or deviousness of Satan's previous speech, and reflects an understanding of leadership which is far nobler and simpler than the insidious and fraudulent misleading which is Satan's guidance. But she is bestowing the authority of a leader upon a mere beast, and Satan, true to form, at once reaps all the benefit from the vocabular exchange. He had offered to merely "conduct" her, but now her invitation that he "lead" her is accepted as the poet employs the present participle "leading" to initiate his description of the serpent's movements. Satan has taken the word "lead" and twisted it so that it conforms to his own

principles, and Eve, though, as yet, still sinless, has unwittingly contributed to this perversion of the word:

> Lead then, said Eve. Hee leading swiftly rowld
> In tangles, and made intricate seem strait,
> To mischief swift. Hope elevates, and joy
> Bright'ns his Crest, as when a wandring Fire,
> Compact of unctuous vapor, which the Night
> Condenses, and the cold invirons round,
> Kindl'd through agitation to a Flame,
> Which oft, they say, some evil Spirit attends
> Hovering and blazing with delusive Light,
> Misleads th'amaz'd Night-wanderer from his way
> To Boggs and Mires, and oft through Pond or Poole,
> There swallow'd up and lost, from succour farr.
>
> (IX. 631-42)

From the command "lead", through the action of "leading" to the statement that Satan, like a "wandring Fire"

> Misleads th'amaz'd Night-wanderer from his way

the degeneration of the verb "lead" is completed. Eve, herself, however, is still sinless, although Milton's vocabulary suggests the danger in which she stands by spanning both the Satanic and angelic actions of "amaz'd" and "wanderer". As an "amaz'd Night-wanderer" Eve's physical movements are like those of the Serpent or the "wandring Fire", whose meandering, her own progress resembles. But unlike the "wandring Fire", the "Night-wanderer" does not wander from his "way" by choice. Indeed his wanderings are quite innocent and can actually be

understood as constituting his "way" rather than representing an aberration from it. It is even possible that the proximity of "wanderer" to "amaz'd" is intended to call into wakefulness the potential action of "wanderer" as "wonderer", thus suggesting the awe of Man beneath the night sky, an awe which had been so beautifully portrayed in book IV. Be that as it may, Eve's wandering is certainly innocent at this point (although the serpent's is not) and although she is led on a labyrinthine path, for her Paradise is still Paradise and her errant movements are movements and nothing more.

In so far as the word describes her own feelings and sensations, "amaz'd" means simply "astonished". Just as the traveller in the simile is wonderstruck by the wandering fire, Eve is amazed by the speech and intelligence of the serpent. This astonishment is not in itself sinful, although its hasty bestowal renders both Eve and the night-wanderer vulnerable. For in addition to suggesting the subject's feelings and sensations, "amaz'd" also works to suggest that Eve and the wandering traveller are objects acted upon. Both are led by a will other than their own into a maze of treacherous paths where they will be "swallow'd up and lost". Even Eve's amazement can be corrupted by Satan so that it leads (or misleads) her further into his maze of deceit. Although "amaz'd" means strictly "wonderstruck", its proximity to "swallow'd up and lost" recalls the description of Satan's followers who were "in wandring mazes lost". The words

"swallow'd up and lost" also directly echo Belial's fear that the fallen angels will be "swallow'd up and lost/In the wide womb of uncreated night" (II. 149-50), a fate which, I have argued above, Milton's syntax also suggests is inevitable for Belial's "thoughts that wander through Eternity" (II. 148). The language of Satan and his angels is not yet directly used of Eve, but it is felt to wait menacingly in the background. When, having eaten the fruit, Eve returns to Adam, the language of Satan is used of and by her directly, and begins to materialize as a possibility in the lines spoken of and by Adam. It is not yet used directly of him, for he is not yet fallen, but it does infiltrate his actions and speech to the extent that, as with Eve before him, his language and actions suggest the imminence of ruin. Immediately before Eve's return, Adam

> had wove/Of choicest Flowrs a Garland to adorn
> Her tresses, and her rural labours crown,
> As Reapers oft are wont thir Harvest Queen (IX 839-41)

The garland, in its circular shape and intricate patterning resembles a maze, but it is a maze wholly innocent of any dark significance. It is the last object in the poem which is free of the taint of sin, the last part of the Creation to manifest complexity and entanglement in its outward appearance whilst remaining pure and simple in its meaning. No sooner does Eve approach and tell her brief story holding in her hand, the "bough of fairest fruit that downy smil'd" (IX 851), than Adam drops the garland. The bough and the garland directly contrast each other, for whereas the smiling fruit is simple in appearance but evil in portent, the garland is oblique and circuitous in its

physical shape but honest and true in what it signifies. The dropping of the garland foreshadows Adam's exchanging of simplicity and innocence for complexity and guilt. It also signifies the loss of the benign intricacy of Eden and its replacement by a more subtle maze which exists within the self rather than outwardly in physical form:

> Adam, soon as he heard
> The fatal Trespass done by Eve, amaz'd,
> Astonied stood and Blank, while honor chill
> Ran through his veins, and all his joints relax'd;
> from his slack hand the Garland wreath'd for Eve
> Down dropp'd, and all the faded Roses shed (IX. 839-93)

Like Eve before him, Adam is "amaz'd". He is struck with wonder but also confronted with the perplexity of the labyrinth. Even his body becomes a maze of veins which "honor chill/(Runs) through" Yet unlike Eve, he is not led into this maze by the deceit of another, but enters it willingly, knowing that he will soon be lost and that Eve already is so:

> How art thou lost, how on a sudden lost (IX. 900),

he says to Eve when she has completed her tale. The words "on a sudden" recall the abruptness with which the paths Eve had followed in her dream in book V had brought her to the forbidden tree:

> I pan[55]'d through ways
> That brought me on a sudden to the Tree
> Of interdicted Knowledge. (V. 50-2)

Eve loses herself suddenly and without at once realizing that she had done so, but Adam converts Eden into a labyrinth by choice:

> Certain my resolution is to Die:

How can I live without thee, how forgo
Thy sweet converse and love so dearly join'd,
To live again in these wild Woods forlorn? (IX 907-10)

It is not the wildness of the wild woods which threatens to make Adam "forlorn". What makes Adam "forlorn" is the thought of life without Eve. In book V Eden had been described as a "Wilderness of sweets" (V. 294) and as being "Wild above Rule or Art" (V. 297). That "wild" is now used in a negative sense suggests the perversion of Creation initiated by Satan through Eve and about to be completed by Adam. Henceforward wilderness and entanglement are to be clouded with the perplexity of Satan's deceit and the abundant growth of Eden itself is to imitate the anarchic disorder of a labyrinth.

When Adam describes Eden as "wild woods", he imagines that this is what Paradise will become if he does not eat the fruit. But when he had eaten it, he wishes that Eden will become a forest impenetrable to sunlight in which he can hide himself. What had been his fear is now his desire. Adam, as a more responsible agent than Eve, does not suddenly discover that he is lost but chooses to lose himself so that he might hide from the faces of God and His angels.

How shall I behold the face
Henceforth of God or Angel, erst with joy
And rapture so oft beheld? Those heav'nly shapes
Will dazzle now this earthly, with thir blaze
Insufferably bright. O might I here
In solitude live savage, in some glade
Obscur'd, where highest Woods impenetrable

To star or sunlight, spread thir umbrage broad,
And brown at Evening: Cover me ye Pines,
Ye Cedars, with innumerable boughs
Hide me where I may never see them more. (IX. 1080-90)

Adam and Eve then proceed into "the thickest Wood" (IX 1100) where they clothe themselves in fig-leaves. Never until Eve's Fall had either Adam or Eve referred to Eden as a "wood" or "woods" In book IV, Eden had been described by the poet as a "woodie Theatre" (IV. 141), but that phrase is almost an oxymoron, for a Classical theatre, unlike a forest, is ordered, symmetrical and (in direct contrast to the "impenetrable" woods Adam now seeks) open to view. Eden is no longer a place of "prospect large" (IV. 144) but a wood like any other wood, and is now seen not as a "Garden: or "Blissful Seat" but as a place of refuge where one may lost oneself. In a fine simile, Milton likens the wood whence Adam and Eve take fig leaves with which to clothe themselves, to forests in India where branches take root in the ground to form new trees. The tree from which Adam and Eve take their leaves is

such as at this day to Indians known
In Malabar or Decan spreads her Arms
Branching so broad and long, that in the ground
The bended Twigs take root, and Daughters grow
About the Mother Tree, a Pillar'd shade
High overarch't, and echoing Walks between. (IX 1002-7)

In its architectural terms ("Pillar'd shade", "echoing Walks") this tree bears lexical correspondence to a labyrinth.

Furthermore, the banyan tree, which also accords with the new complex world of postlapsarian Man, a world where what appears at first to be one and whole, is, on closer scrutiny, many and particular. That Milton should select the banyan tree (which is both a single tree and a grove) and "not that kind for Fruit renown'd" (IX 1110) as the source of Adam's and Eve's fig leaf clothing is perhaps also significant in that this tree, unlike those which soar above the walls of Paradise in book IV or those which spring from the ground in book VII, does not follow the "kindly enclyning" of trees, which is to grow upwards, but like Adam and Eve themselves, is twisted from the end of its creation to follow a wandering path downwards into the earth. Nor are the subject and figure of this simile likened to each other as, elsewhere in the poem, the prelapsarian and postlapsarian worlds are compared. The simile is not introduced with the usual verbal sign "as when", which serves to maintain a distance between subject and figure even while indicating their similarity, but instead it is introduced with the words "such as". In a sense, it is not a simile at all, for the species of tree which we know or have heard of in the fallen world is the same species to which Adam and Eve now turn. The words "such as" remind us that the world of Adam and Eve is now our world, and Eden is lost. Adam and Eve pass into the maze of the banyan grove "both together" (IX 1099), but when they emerge, it is as individuals ready to blame each other. Adam says to Eve:

> Would thou hadst heark'n'd to my words, and stay'd
> With me, as I besought thee, when that strange

Desire of wand'ring this unhappy Morn,
I know not whence possess'd thee. (IX 1134-7)

Adam, as Fish notes in Surprised by Sin[5], here uses "wand'ring" in its Satanic context as meaning deviation from the straight and narrow path of virtue. In blaming Eve, he is partly correct, but so is Eve when she is moved by Adam's vocabulary to upbraid him for imputing fault to innocence. She is wrong in thinking herself blameless, but correct in discerning Adam's misuse of "wand'ring", a use which deprives the word of its original innocence and concedes it to Satan:

What words have past thy Lips, Adam severe,
Imput'st thou that to my default, or will
Of wand'ring, as thou call'st it. (IX. 1144-6)

The words which now pass Adam's lips are those used of and by Satna. He indeed speaks in "alter'd style" (IX. 1132). The maze they have entered continues "in mutual accusation" (IX. 1187) and the final line of the book states that

of thir vain contest appear'd no end. (IX 1189)

The futility of their blaming of each other is the futility of a maze. The paths of their arguments are oblique and no exit may be found.

In book X, following the shifting of the constellations and the earth's axis so as to end the perpetual Spring of Paradise, we find Adam alone, "hid in gloomiest shade" (X. 716). His ensuing soliloquy traces a path of zig-zagging arguments all of which attempt to exculpate himself from responsibility for what has occurred. First of all, he objects that he did not request

his own Creation. But Adam himself dismisses this objection on the grounds that God's gifts should have been rejected when they were offered rather than when they have been spoilt by him (X. 755ff). Adam's second objection is that all his sons are to pay for his crime when they themselves committed no offence.

> Ah, why should all mankind
> For one man's fault thus guiltless be condemn'd,
> If guiltless? (X. 822-4)

As a principle, this objection is sound. But the very words "if guiltless" already suggest the denial of the application of this principle to the circumstances of Adam's sin. For, as he himself goes on to say, his progeny can never now be anything but guilty:

> But from me what can proceed,
> But all compt, both Mind and Will deprav'd,
> Not to do onely, but to will the same
> With me? (X. 824-7)

The endlessness and futility of Adam's attempts to exculpate himself find a corresponding chord in the endlessness of the misery he now feels to be imminent. When he objects that he did not ask to be created, he complains also that the loss of Eden should be "Sufficient Penaltie" and asks

> why has thou added
> The sense of endless woes? (X. 753-4)

Adam's realization that all posterity is to be sentenced with him comes with his sensation of death as something perpetual rather than instantaneous:

But say/That Death be not one shook (stroak), as I suppos'd,
Bereaving sense, but endless miseries
From this day onward, which I feel begun
Both in me, and without me, and so last
To perpetuitie. (X. 808-13)

The sense of the endlessness and futility of his excuses is expressed finally in another image of a labyrinth:

Him after all Disputes
Forc't I absolve: all my evasions vain
And reasonings, though through Mazes, lead me still
But to my own conviction: first and last
On mee, mee onely, as the source and spring
Of all corruption, all the blame lights due. (X. 828-33)

Death is endless, misery is endless and Adam's "evasions" and "reasonings" only form a maze from which there is no exit. Adam is driven by his conscience into an "Abyss of fears and horrors"

out of which/I find no way. (X. 843-4)

This is the centre of the maze, the centre of the "argument" of Paradise Lost. If we understand its thesis as the vindication of God and the assertion of a moral of obedience, it is the centre of that too. But it is my belief that Milton's thesis in Paradise Lost is to reveal the way out of this maze, a way that takes the most subtle turns of the labyrinth and uses them to trace a clear path to Grace. It is to this way that I now address myself.

II. With Serpent errour wandring, found thir way.

The word "way", like "wander", "wonder", "maze" and "amaze", also has a variety of actions in the poem, and is understood differently by different characters. But unlike the other words it is not so much fought over as it is misunderstood. It has an objective meaning and application which is slowly revealed in the course of the poem and which lends meaning to the other words so that they share in its justification. I shall examine shortly how these words, in particular, are coloured by "way", but first of all I shall look at the different understandings of "way" available to the different characters.

We have seen how in the exchange between Satan and Uriel in book III, the word "wandring", which has ominous overtones for the reader when used of or by Satan, fails to awake any suspicion in the good angel even though it is used both by Satan and of him. For the innocent Uriel the word is wholly innocent, and, perhaps, in its proximity to two instances of the word "wondrous" even carries the suggestion that the wandering Cherub is full of wonder at God's works. Certainly Uriel detects no hint or suggestion of aberration from virtue in Satan's vocabulary. With regard to "wand'ring", it is thus possible to see Satan as having the advantage of understanding, for Uriel's very goodness and innocence prevents him from responding to a sign which is discernible even to the fallen reader of the poem. But a little later in the same conversation, Uriel used the word "way" in such

a way that it carries the suggestion of Satan's ultimate destiny, even though that suggestion is not at once apparent to the reader and is certainly not intended consciously by Uriel. Having given Satan directions, Uriel says:

> Thy way thou canst not miss, me mine requires.
>
> (III. 735)

By this, Uriel means nothing more than that the Cherub before him cannot fail to arrive at Paradise, his intended destination. This is all Uriel means and it is all that the reader and Satan understand by his words. But no sooner does Satan arrive at his destination at the very beginning of the next book, than he at once uses the word "way" in an altogether different context:

> which way shall I flie
> Infinite wrauth, and infinite despaire?
> Which way I flie is-Hell; my self am Hell;
> And in the lowest deep a lower deep
> Still threatning to devour me opens wide,
> To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n. (IV. 73-8)

Satan is indeed unable to miss his way and the way allotted to him, as Uriel had foretold, is an altogether different way to that which Uriel follows. The division of ways which Uriel speaks of in simple physical terms is now revealed as a spiritual division of ways. I do not mean by this that Uriel knew that the cherub was Satan all along and was merely toying with him. There is no doubt that Uriel is fooled by Satan's disguise until this very moment on Mount Niphates

when Satan's inner turmoil breaks without warning into his gestures and speech. My point is that Uriel's vocabulary of innocence carries its own defence, in that it is founded upon a universal principle of Truth. Uriel may be fooled by appearances and deceived by his lexical innocence into understanding only the simplest meaning of a word when a more complicated significance is possible, but this very innocence enables him to speak with oracular foresight even without realizing that he is doing so. It is as if the word "way" itself were imbued with some power which enabled Uriel, to pronounce sentence upon Satan. Even when Uriel decries Satan's disfigurement on Mount Niphates, he does so because "his eye pursu'd him down/The way he went" (IV. 123-6). As the word evolves in the poem, it becomes clear that it does indeed have the effect of locating its subject or speaker in relation to absolutes.

"Wand'ring" is a more subjective word. For Uriel it means simply "rambling" and Satan probably understands it in the same way. But whatever it may signify to Satan, its significance when used of him is of meaningless, undirected, endless perplexity. Both "wand'ring" and "way" work against Satan to suggest his isolation and the futility of his cause, and in both instances we see Satan's attempts to use and understand language come to nothing as his attempts to use and understand the Creation are destined to do so. But the subjectivity of "wand'ring" enables him to evade Uriel's vigilance,

whereas the objectivity of "way" remains with him like a curse, to draw him down to Hell even when he stands in Paradise.

It is not a coincidence that "way" is credited with objective reality in this poem which intends to justify "the wayes" of God to men. Throughout Paradise Lost the word "way" is stripped of its various misinterpretations and misapplications to be revealed finally in its full splendour. It is not a neutral word like "wander" or "maze" which can be understood through a wide spectrum of action in which no one meaning is more authentic than another, but rather it has its own inner power and is used only at the peril of those who employ it. Only the truly innocent, such as Uriel, may use it safely. It may be that this word has even influenced the structure of Paradise Lost, for nowhere is it more often used or less understood than it is in the first two books. From its initial Hellish interpretation, it rises through the following books to suggest the Providence of God in the Creation. Then, after the Fall, in which Adam and Eve like the "amaz'd Night-wanderer" are mislead from their way, it is briefly claimed by Sin and Death, before the revelation of God's Grace reclaims it as the rightful property of God and Man and identifies it as an emblem of the bond between them.

In book II the fallen angels use "way" to mean either "stratagem" or "path". As a strategem, they seek for a way to thwart God's Will, and as a Path, they seek for a way out of Hell. Both uses of "way" are futile, for no stratagem can thwart God, and, for the rebel angels (as

Satan discovers on Mount Niphates)all paths lead to, and not from, Hell.

Satan initiates the infernal debate in book II by asking his followers to advise

> by what best way,
> Whether of open Warr or covert guile, (II 40-1)

they may challenge God's victory in Heaven. Moloch at once springs to his feet and seizes the word in such a way as to use it in its simplest, most direct meaning, urging his fellows

> Arm'd with Hell flames and fury all at once
> O're Heav'ns high Towrs to force resistless way,
> (II. 61-2)

Here, Moloch speaks as if the way to Heaven were easy, but a little later, perhaps in anticipation of Belial's reply, he feels the need to go back and support that assumption with a fuller argument:

> But perhaps/The way seems difficult and steep to scale
> With upright wing against a higher foe.
> Let such bethink them, if the sleepy drench
> Of that forgetful Lake benumm not still,
> That in our proper motion we ascend
> Up to our native seat. (II. 70-6)

From this principle of "kindly enclyning" Moloch concludes that "th'ascent is easie" (81). But even now the word "way" refuses to submit to his control, but reemerges in the very next sentence to pose a new challenge that his argument must deal with:

Th'ascent is easie then;
Th'event is fear'd; should we again promise
Our stronger, some worse way his wrath may find
To our destruction. (II. 81-4)

With protean swiftness, "way" has changed its meaning from "path" to "stratagem" and slipped out of Moloch's grasp to confront him again. He answers the challenge of this imagined way of wrath in his usual fashion of head-on defiance, preferring extinction to eternal misery. Moloch never doubts that the "worse way" God will employ will be that of military resistance. He is correct in his belief that God will find a new way to answer the rebel angels should they again provoke Him, and the swiftness with which Moloch prepares himself to counter this way, compares- favourably with Belial's lethargy, but his imagination is entirely lacking when he endeavours to conceive what God's "worse way" will be. God is indeed to find a way, but it is to be of a kind beyond Moloch's wildest dreams, and all his attempts to understand it, let alone resist it or force a way through it are to be utterly futile. Moloch's speech, for all its rhetorical fervour, reads like a continuing struggle between himself and the word "way". He consistently tries to subdue the word to his will, but utlimately the best way he can suggest is that of extinction in battle, a solution which itself springs from a misunderstanding of God's "worse Way".

Once Moloch has thus reached his despairing conclusion, the word "way" is inherited by Belial, who seeks to wrest it in a new direction entirely. He at once abandons the word.

For Belial, all ways are impossible. Stratagems are futile, and all pathways to Heaven are inaccessible:

> the Towrs of Heav'n are fill'd
> With Armed watch, that render all access
> Impregnable. (II. 129-31)

The possibility of breaking a way out of Hell is considered only to be dismissed:

> Or could we break our way
> By force, and at our heels all Hell should rise
> With blackest Insurrection, to confound
> Heav'ns purest Light, yet our great Enemy
> All incorruptible would on his Throne
> Sit unpolluted, and th'Ethereal mould
> Incapable of stain would soon expel
> Her mischief, and purge off the baser fire
> Victorious. (II. 134-42)

Belial's answer to the challenge of the dangerous way to Heaven is to ignore it. He wishes not to find a way, but to "wander through Eternity" (148) in his thoughts. This is the first time in the poem that the words "way" and "wander" have been brought close together. Henceforward the reader is ready to understand "wandering" as wandering from a way rather than through or in it, and it is only to be with the revelation of God's way and the consequent cleansing of "wand'ring" that he slowly learns to read "wand'ring" innocently as Uriel does.

The fallen angels themselves, however, continue to place "wand'ring" and "way" together, without any sense of

the contradiction between them. This is ironic, for notwithstanding the fact that they use "wand'ring" in ignorance of its darker tones, the contexts in which they use the word are always such as to bring those tones to the surface. Beelzebub, having suggested the plan for Man's destruction devised by Satan, thus prepares the way for his Master's offering of himself:

> who shall tempt with wandring feet
> The dark unbottom'd infinite Abyss
> And through the palpable obscure find out
> His uncouth way...? (II. 404-7)

Fish draws attention to the proximity of "wandring" to "tempt":

> the association of the verb with 'tempt' is ominous (although here tempt means 'try') since we know that Eve will wander from Adam and together, tempted, they will wander from God into the dark unbottom'd abyss of sin.[6]

But no less significant is the juxtaposition of "way" with "uncouth". Strictly, uncouth means "unknown", signifying that Satan is wandering without a guide through unfamiliar territory. But "uncouth" could also, even in Milton's time, mean "ignorant". Satan is to be ignorant of the way in more ways than one, and for all that he might trace a path "through the palpable obscure: he is to be destined still to uncouth wandering. This suggestion is developed later in the same book when Satan boasts of his quest to Sin and Death:

I go/This uncouth errand sole, and one for all
My self expose, with lonely steps to tread
Th'unfounded deep, and through the void immense
To search with wandring quest a place foretold
Should be. (II. 826-31)

By "errand" Satan means "quest". This "uncouth errand" corresponds in his mind with the "uncouth way" spoken of by Beelzebub. But the uncouthness of the errand awakes in the latter word the sense of "error", a sense which is answered in "wandring quest" a few lines later. Satan's attempts to describe his journey in grand terms constantly meet resistance from the language he employs, a language which undermines his pretence at grandeur with a darker sense of melancholy and futility. Although he strives to undertake the way, he does not, like Belial, simply ignore it, for him, no less than for Belial, the way declines into mere wandering.

But this similarity of Satan's way to Belial's exists in spite of rather than because of his choice. Satan's understanding of the way is essentially different from those of both Moloch and Belial. Satan recognizes the difficulty of the way as Moloch does not, but he does not flinch from it as Belial does. He glories in its peril and describes the danger in a line that harks directly back to the Sibyl's warning to Aeneas in book VI of the Aeneid:

O Progeny of Heav'n, Empyreal Thrones,
With reason hath deep silence and demur
Seis'd us, though undismaid: long is the way
And hard, that out of Hell leads up to light. (II. 430-3)

The Sibyl had warned Aeneas thus:

> sate sanguine divum,
> Tros Anchisiade, facilis descensus Averno;
> noctes atque dies patet atri ianva Ditis;
> sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras,
> hoc opus, hic labor est (VI. 123-9)

> (O child of blood divine,
> Anchises' son, descent to hell is easy:
> all night, all day black Pluto's door stands wide.
> To recall the step, escape to air and sky--
> this, this is task and toil!

Satan would like to see himself as an epic hero, venturing like Aeneas, upon a quest which few or none have undertaken before him and from which there seems little hope of return. But between Satan's quest and that of Aeneas there is one important difference; Aeneas ventures down into Hell as an intruder. It is in the upper world that he belongs. For Satna, however, Hell is home. For him it is the upper airs which are a place of peril.

Nevertheless, the way he chooses, although he is doomed to wander from it, is the way of heroism. This is different from the cowardice of Belial or the desperate courage of Moloch. Although all of the rebel angels are doomed alike to wander, each follows his own sad path. After the great debate,

> the ranged powers
> Disband, and wandring, each his several way
> Pursues, as inclination or sad choice

Leads him perplext, where he may likeliest find
Truce to his restless thoughts. (II. 522-6)

The fact that each fallen angel wanders his own way, shows that they have no true way at all, for the way, in Paradise Lost, is essentially single.

But while the rebel angels are destined each to wander his own way, Satan does create something of a unified way in the path he traces through Chaos. Following his steps, Sin and Death, (we are forewarned even as early as book II), fashion a mighty bridge:

Sin and Death amain
Following his track, such was the will of Heav'n,
Pav'd after him a broad and beat'n way
Over the dark Abyss, whose boiling Gulf
Tamely endur'd a Bridge of wondrous length.
(II. 1024-8)

Along this bridge, compounded from the material of Chaos, Milton tells us

Spirits perverse
With easy intercourse pass to and fro
To tempt or punish mortals, except whom
God and good Angels guard by special grace.
(II. 1030-3)

This bridge is the greatest single claim that Satan and his followers can lay to the word "way". It is single, it is (or at least appears to be) permanent, and, like a true way, it does not meander but moves directly to its destination.

It is not until we have seen this bridge again in book X that we are given an indication how it too is a false way and undeserving of the name. In the meantime, the understandings of "way" we have encountered in the first two books of the poem, are not cancelled, but are challenged, when the Son offers himself to die for Man's sins in book III. The Son prefaces His offer with the statement that grace shall find her way into the hearts of men:

> Father, thy word is past, man shall find grace;
> And shall grace not find means, that finds her way,
> The speediest of thy winged messengers,
> To visit all thy creatures, and to all
> Comes unprevented, unimplor'd, unwought?
>
> (III. 227-31)

It is possible that the "way" which Grace finds is meant to refer to the Son Himself. Certainly Milton's contemporaries would have been aware of Christ's identification of Himself in the Bible as

> the way, the truth, and the life,[7]

and it is possible that Milton's lines would have brought those words from St. John's Gospel to mind. We have already seen how Quarles alludes to Christ's words in his use of "way" in the Emblemes.

Be that as it may, henceforward the reader is aware of three major forces which struggle for the word "way". First of all, there is Satan and his followers, who wander through many ways but seem to arrive nowhere, or else, like

Satan, in Paradise, have no sooner arrived at their destination than they discover that they are at their point of embarkation. Secondly, there is the bridge of Sin and Death, which appears to be straight even though it follows Satan's wandering course through Chaos, and, finally, there is the way of grace, as yet only promised for the future and not made actual. When, therefore, in book III Uriel says to Satan "Thy way thou canst not miss, me mine requires", the reader should be ready for the development of this division of ways and alert to the forces which contest each other for the word. For the remainder of book III and throughout the books IV, V, VI and VII, "way" is used most often to describe movement in or of the Creation, but our awareness of these contesting forces lends to each instance a significance beyond the immediate. Thus when, in book III, Satan moving through the fixed stars

> winds with ease
> Through the pure marble Air his oblique way. (III. 563-4)

His juxtaposition of "oblique" and "way" reflects the obliquity of Satan's design in coming to the universe created for Man. A little later, in book IV, Satan temporarily finds his way barred by the wall of Paradise:

> Now to th'ascent of that steep savage Hill
> Satan had journey'd on, pensive and slow;
> But further way found none, so thick entwin'd,
> As one continu'd brake, the undergrowth
> Of shrubs and tangling bushes had perlext
> All path of Man or Beast that pass'd that way.
>
> (IV. 172-7)

On one level these instances of "way" seem to favour Satan's cause. His first experience of Eden is as a maze, and as we have seen in the previous section, it is his achievement that he turns Eden itself into a maze where Adam and Eve are lost. But on closer inspection, it is Satan's own path which is stopped short. Those "of Man or Beast" might be "perplext", but Man and beast had still "pass'd that way". Satan, however, has to resort to leaping over the wall; the innocent twistings and turnings of Eden's walks may excite his contempt, but they are open to Man and beast in a way they are not to him.
I have examined already the line "With Serpent errour wand'ring, found thir way" (VII 302) and have argued that this description of the gathering of the waters at the Creation prefigures the gathering of the souls of the saved on the Day of Judgement. In the account of the war in Heaven in book VI, a similar image, expressed in similar lexical terms, is employed as a simile to describe Satan's humiliation at the hands of Abdiel in single combat:

> ten paces huge
> He back recoil'd; the tenth on bended knee
> His massy Spear upstay'd; as if on Earth
> Winds under ground or waters forcing way
> Sidelong, had pusht a Mountain from his seat
> Half sunk with all his Pines. Amazement seiz'd
> The Rebel Thrones, but greater rage to see
> Thus foil'd thir mightiest. (VI 193-200)

Whenever we see the forces of Milton's Creation find their way through or over obstacles, the event is always at least applicable to the prevailing of God's Will over that of His antagonists, or else, as here, directly likened to such a prevailing.

In addition to such natural contexts as these, "way" also appears in moments where Man's easiest route to God is being discussed. In book V, after Raphael has described to Adam the Chain of Being, Adam replies:

> Well hast thou taught the way that might direct
> Our knowledge, and the scale of Nature set
> From center to circumference, whereon
> In contemplation of created things
> By steps we may ascend to God. (V. 508-12)

This path to God is one of contemplation, but in book VII, when Man is created, the Son states that human beings may eventually reach Heaven in fact as well as thought, for they were not made to live on earth eternally, but were placed there only

> till by degree of merit rais'd
> They open to themselves at length the way
> Up hither under long obedience tri'd. (VII. 157-9)

After the Fall, when Man has failed in his obedience to God, this way is no longer enough. He is to need outside help. But although neither the way of contemplation, nor that of obedience, coincide with the way of Providence, both are included in it. So, too, is the way of love, which in book VIII, Adam says "Leads up to Heav'n, is both way and guide"

(VIII 612-3). Before the Fall, any of these ways is sufficient to lead Man to God. After the Fall, however, Adam and Eve find themselves in an endless maze from which there is no way out. Their "vain contest" at the conclusion of book IX can find "no end", while Adam, in book X, is driven "through Mazes" to his own conviction and bewails his despair "out of which/ I find no way" (X. 844). Between the end of book IX and these lines in book X, we are returned once more to Sin and Death, who, now that Adam and Eve have lost their way, make their own claim upon the word. Sin thus says to Death:

> Let us try/Advent'rous work, yet to thy power and mine
> Not unagreeable, to found a path
> Over this Main from Hell to that new World
> Where Satan now prevails, a Monument
> Of merit high to all th'infernal Host,
> Easing thir passage hence, for intercourse,
> Or transmigration, as thir lot shall lead.
> Nor can I miss the way, so strongly drawn
> By this new felt attraction and instinct.
> (X. 254-63)

Death at once replies:

> Go whither Fate and inclination strong
> Leads thee, I shall not lag behind, nor err
> The way, thou leading, such a sent I draw
> Of carnage. (X. 265-8)

The "kindly enclyning" which Moloch had falsely claimed would render the angels' reascent to Heaven easy, now that Adam and

Eve have sinned, does indeed draw Sin and Death to Paradise by the "connatural force" which unites "With secret amity things of like kind" (X. 248). In a sense, Moloch's dream has come true. But even in this description, the language used of the bridge suggests its lack of authenticity compared with the "way" of God's Providence. The bridge is said by the poet to provide

> a passage broad,
> Smooth, easy, inoffensive down to Hell. (X. 304-5)

"Inoffensive" is here used in its Latin sense of "free of stumbling blocks", but the word is as slippery as the slope it describes, for understood in its English sense it is the very opposite adjective to what we would expect. This bridge is the most offensive structure in the whole Miltonic cosmos, reaching out from Hell to lay claim upon God's Creation, seeking to snatch it from under the very gaze of Heaven. The causeway of Sin and Death alights upon the outer shell of the universe at the very point where the universe is connected to Heaven by a golden stair and where a third passage runs down through the turning spheres of the universe to the earth:

> and now in little space
> The confines met of Empyrean Heav'n
> And of this World, and on the left hand Hell
> With long reach interpos'd: three sev'ral ways
> In sight, to each of these three places led.
> (X. 320-4)

The interposing bridge of Hell is like an arm reaching out to claim its own. It is even like Eve's "rash hand"

Forth reaching to the Fruit (IX 781)

in the moment of her Fall. Whatever else the bridge is, it is certainly not "inoffensive". Immediately after the line in which this word appears there follows the simile likening the bridge to that built by Xerxes, a simile which, as I have argued in my first chapter, suggests the arrogance and futility of the infernal enterprise. The bridge is a wonderful artifact, but if it is to share the fate of Xerxes' bridge over the Hellespont, its claim to be an eternal way is most unconvincing.

Furthermore, when Satan travels along it, he does so in stealth and secrecy, not openly as one would travel a seventeenth century highway:

> And now thir way to Earth they had descri'd,
> To Paradise first tending, when behold
> Satan in likeness of an Angel bright
> Betwixt the Centaur and the Scorpion steering
> His Zenith, while the Sun in Aries rose:
> Disguis'd he came, but those his Children dear
> Thir Parent soon discern'd, though in disguise.
>
> (X. 325-31)

Not only Satan's disguise, but the very path he treads speaks of concealment, for by travelling through the zodiacal signs of Sagittarius and Scorpio, Satan places the earth directly between himself and Uriel, who as regent of the Sun, is

watchman over the whole universe. Of all the paths that Satan could take to the portal of the universe (this portal is to be found where the "three sev'ral ways" of line 323 meet) he chooses this meandering course, a route which is chosen for no other reason that to evade Uriel's gaze and hide in the shadow of the earth as it rotates around the universe. Uriel might now be unable to pursue Satan with his gaze, following, as he had previously, "The way he went" (IV 125-6), but this debility arises only because Satan has wandered from the straight paths of the cosmos.

There is a difference between Satan's way and that of Sin and Death. Satan sees himself as the new Lord of the universe and Sin and Death as his deputy governors:

> on your joint vigor now
> My hold of this new Kingdom all depends.
> (X. 405-6)

But whereas Sin and Death do have the right to enter the universe, Satan has none. Sin and Death are called to the universe by God, not by Satan, and his surprise at seeing them is as great as their ease in recognizing him. Although both Satan and his progeny use the same road, they move in different directions. Satan is to

> Descend through Darkness, on your Road with ease
> (X. 394),

whereas Sin and Death move

> this way, among those numerous Orbs/All (theirs).
> (X. 397-8).

Satan can only move through the shadows of the universe, fearful of Uriel's watchful gaze, but when Sin and Death pass downward through the universe,

> the blasted Stars lookt wan,
> And Planets, Planet-strook, real Eclipse
> Then suffer'd. (X. 412-4)

Satan, however, can only move in the opposite direction:

> Th'other way Satan went down
> The Causey to Hell Gate. (X. 414-5)

Although the "broad way" (X. 473) built by Sin and Death may be open to Satan and his followers, and is even said by Satan to "expedite (their) glorious march" (474), it could not have been fashioned but for Man's sin and could only have been fashioned by Sin and Death.

Even the singleness of the way of Sin and Death is scattered when they reach Paradise, for no sooner have they arrived than

> both betook them several ways,
> Both to destiny, or unimmortal make
> All kinds. (X. 610-2)

The straight path of Sin and Death is woven into the twisting paths of the world, and like the fallen angels, who in book II, had wandered "each his several way" (II. 523), they also are ultimately doomed to wander even as they conquer.

Immediately after these lines, occurs God's speech in which he states that Sin and Death

> know not that I call'd and drew them thither
> My Hell-hounds, to lick up the draft and filth

Which man's polluting Sin with taint hath shed
On what was pure. (629-32)

From proud conquerors Sin and Death have been reduced to scavengers.

Still, when Adam exclaims at line 844 that he can "find no way", the "broad way" built by Sin and Death is felt to await him inevitably and to provide the only possible exit from the maze of Eden. It is in the face of this lexical challenge that the word "way" must be reclaimed by Heaven.

Within his maze of despair, Adam is powerless to find a way out until Eve approaches him. In the opening lines of book XI, we learn that even this reconciliation is only possible because

Prevenient Grace descending had remov'd
The stony from thir hearts. (XI 3-4)

Eve is not Adam's guide to salvation, but she is instrumental in his escape from damnation. If we were to pursue the analogy with Virgil's description of the labyrinth of Knossos which I briefly drew at the beginning of this chapter, she plays the part of the princess Ariadne, leading her lover from the labyrinth guided by the thread given her by another;

Next came that winding, wearying, hopeless house;
but Daedalus pitied a princess lost for love
and solved the riddle and puzzle of those halls,
with thread to guide blind feet.

The thread in this case is God's Grace, and the one who bestows it is the Son.

Consistently throughout Paradise Lost, the Son is depicted as the only being capable of resolving the endlessness of wanderings divorced from Himself. Even the good angels are incapable of driving out the rebels unaided, but

> in perpetual fight they needs must fight
> Endless and no solution will be found. (VI 693-4)

Only the Son's intervention can bring the struggle to an end. Again, in book XII, Man is doomed to fall again and again into the ways of sin until Christ enters the arena of history to

> bring back/Through the world's wilderness long
> wander'd man
> Safe to eternal Paradise of rest. (XII 312-4)

So now, of Adam's and Eve's mutual accusation "no end" (IX 1189) appears until "Prevenient Grace" (XI 3) descends. Softened by Grace, Eve follows Christ in offering herself to die for Adam, stating that she will return "to the place of Judgement" and

> There with my cries importune Heaven, that all
> The sentence from thy head remov'd may light
> On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe,
> Mee mee only just object of his ire. (X. 933-6)

Adam replies "If Prayers/Could after high Decrees, I to that Place/Would speed before thee" (952-4). Prayers may not alter high decrees, but they are capable of eliciting new ones. It is because Adam and Eve fill the air with prayerful sighs "in sign/Of sorrow unfeign'd, and humiliation meek" (X. 1103-4) that a way is revealed:

To Heav'n thir prayers
Flew up, nor miss'd the way, by envious winds
Blown vagabond or frustrate. (XI 14-6)

Unlike the "fruits/Of painful superstition and blind zeal" in III, 451-2, these prayers are not scattered into the limbo of vanity by "a violent cross wind". The words "nor miss'd the way" most closely recall the exclamation of Sin in book X that she cannot "miss the way" in finding her Father. Death also had proclaimed "I shall not lag behind, nor err/The way" (X. 260-7). Like Sin and Death, the prayers are drawn to their destination by natural sympathy. This attraction of like things to like indicates that, whilst Man's body may be forfeit to death, his soul still bears kinship to Heaven.

When, in book XI, Michael comes to escort Adam from Paradise and reveal to him the future history of mankind, he comes "as Man/Clad to meet Man" (XI 239-40), thus prefiguring the Incarnation of Christ in human flesh. Once more the word "way" appears, as Michael,

To find where Adam shelter'd, took his way (XI 223).

Henceforward, Man cannot, as before the Fall, trace his own way to God by "contemplation of created things" (V 511) or "degree of merit" (VII 137) or even love, but he is dependent upon God's Grace to open the way for him. This does not mean that his successful journey along that way is guaranteed. The final two books of Paradise Lost still witness a conflict for the word "way", but now the conflict is not so much

between Satan and God or even between Sin and Death and God, but is rather a conflict of

supernal Grace contending
With sinfulness of Men. (XI 359-60)

The "several wayes" which Sin and Death had throughout the Garden in book X change the nature of their claim upon the word so that henceforward, when it appears in a negative context it is most often in the plural, and the complicated ways of sinful Man contend with the single way of supernal Grace.

When Adam sees in his vision the waylaying and corruption of "that sober Race of Men, whose Lives/Religious titl'd them the Sons of God" (XI 621-2), he is moved to exclaim:

O pittie and shame, that they who to live well
Enter'd so faire, should turn aside to tread
Paths indirect, or in the mid way faint! (XI 629-31)

The world of history is still a maze of indirect paths, but at least a way of virtue exists, even though men "turn aside" from it. Later in book XI, Adam sees sinful mankind confronted by Noah, who

of thir doings great dislike declar'd,
And testifi'd against thir wayes. (XI 720-1)

These words are to be echoed later when God chooses a single nation for His favour, leaving the rest "to thir own polluted wayes" (XII 110). Noah, meanwhile, having preached "as to Souls/In Prison" (XI 724-5) withdraws and builds his Ark.

The guidance of God through this whole episode is stressed by Michael, who identifies the entry of the beasts into the Ark as "a wonder strange" (XI 732). But Adam, grieving at the sight of so many of his sons perishing at once, despairs even of Noah's survival:

> those few escap't
> Famin and anguish will at last consume
> Wandring that watrie Desert. (XI 777-9)

Here Adam uses "wandring" in its melancholy sense, but in fact Noah is guided and protected by God's Grace. He does not, like Satan, wander a desert but clearly sees God's way,

> the onely Son of light
> In a dark Age, against example good,
> Against allurement, custom, and a World
> Offended; fearless of reproach and scorn,
> Or violence, hee of thir wicked wayes
> Shall them admonish, and before them set
> The paths of righteousness. (XI 808-14)

The Ark is not doomed to wander, but is, as Michael says "a wondrous Ark" (XI 819). The latter word seems to deliberately echo Adam's and translate it into a new context of Grace and divine protection. When "wandring" next appears in the poem (its penultimate occurrence) it is to describe a desert wandering Ark of a different kind--the Ark of the Covenant:

> his next Son for Wealth and Wisdom fam'd,
> The clouded Ark of God till then in Tents
> Wandring, shall in a glorious Temple enshrine.
> (XII 332-5)

Solomon's enshrining of the Ark, for all the splendour of the temple, seems almost an imprisoning of what was intended to wander. The elaborate description of the building of the Temple in I Kings vi-vii and II Chronicles iii-iv would certainly have caused the Puritan Milton to be suspicious of Solomon. In book I he had spoken of Moloch's defrauding of Solomon that had led to the latter's building "His Temple right against the Temple of God/On that opprobrious Hill" (I. 402-3). Even now when Milton speaks of Solomon's building of the Temple of God, he at once goes on to warn of the sins of the Israelites under his reign, their "Foul Idolatries, and other faults/Heapt to the popular summe", which

> God, as to leave them, and expose thir Land,
> Thir Citie, his Temple, and his holy Ark
> With all his sacred things, a suom and pray
> To that proud Citie, whose high Walls thou saws't
> Left in confusion, Babylon theme call'd.
>
> (XII 338-43)

The raising of the Temple, although good in its intentions, is for Milton, in its pomp and splendour, only a stone's throw from the raising of Babel. It is ironic that the very Temple designed to protect the Ark, leads to its loss. It was safer when it wandered the desert. This whole episode is an example of the sinfulness of Man leading him astray, but the mercy of God's Grace, glimpsed in the vision of the Ark on the waters and developed in the picture of the wandering Ark of the Covenant, is already beginning to "justifie" the

word "wandring" which has for so long been polluted by Satan. Furthermore, the description of the Ark wandring "in Tents" comes only twenty lines after Michael has likened that Joshua who led the Israelites into Canaan to his more glorious namesake ("whom the Gentiles Jesus call")

> who shall quell
> The adversarie Serpent, and bring back
> Through the worlds wilderness long wander'd man.
> (XII 312-3)

Wandering in the wilderness is now seen as a part of God's way rather than as an aberration from it.

The final instance of "wandring" occurs in the very last lines of the poem, where it is embraced within the way, now fully unfolded, so far as it can be in this world:

> The world was all before them, where to choose
> Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide:
> They hand in hand with wandring steps and slow,
> Through Eden took thir solitarie way. (XII 645-8)

It will be useful to compare these lines to those with which Satan presents himself at the court of Chaos:

> I come no spy,
> With purpose to explore or to disturb
> The secrets of your Realm, but by constraint
> Wandring this darksome Desart, as my way
> Lies through your spacious Empire up to light,
> Alone, and without guide, half lost I seek.
> (II 970-5)

The word "solitarie" in the book XII passage, beautifully blends the tragic mood of the "argument" of Paradise Lost with the assertion of Providence that is its thesis. The human pair move out as tiny figures into a vast landscape, without the protection of angelic guard, yet their way is not "solitarie" while Providence is their "guide". Satan, however, is "without guide" and so is utterly alone. He can, perhaps, after these lines, claim Chaos as a guide, but Chaos is also the name given to the "spacious Empire" through which he moves and where he is lost. For Adam, love "is both way and guide" (VIII 612-3), for Satan, on the contrary, Chaos is both way and guide. Satan's "wandring", guided only by Chaos, is wholly melancholy. He wanders ever in search of a way, but succeeds only in leading others into his own maze, discovering that wherever he goes, whichever way he flies is Hell. The "wandring steps and slow" with which Adam and Eve set foot into the world of history, however, recover something of the original innocence of "wandring". Not quite all of it, for their actions are now, of necessity, more consequential and more self-conscious than those of the "wandring Spirit of Heav'n, by fountain side" in book IV or Adam's "wandring" following his Creation in anticipation of his divine Guide's appearance. In those innocent instances of "wandring" before the Fall, "wandring" is not something separate from the way but actually constitutes it. If Satan in the serpent makes intricate seem straight, Adam "wandring" in Eden, or the rivers "wandring with Serpent

errour" make intricate become straight. Adam's and Eve's wandering from Eden in book XII may not, as in their days of innocence directly coincide with the way, but neither is it wandering from it. Their "wandring steps" are closest, perhaps, to the "wondring" gaze which Adam casts upon the sky in his first waking moments. Both wondering and wandering are here expressions of different kinds of infancy. Both Adam in his Creation and Adam and Eve in their expulsion, are as children standing upon the threshhold of a new world. The unfallen Adam has greater access to wonder than does the fallen, for action is less important to him. But although wonderment has changed to wandering for the expelled Adam and Eve, wonder is still not banished from their lives and serves to give character to the kind of wanderings they execute. The unfallen and the repentant Adam still have much in common. The unfallen Adam's wondering gaze embraces wandering, for his consciousness must move through the universe in order to encompass its complex beauty and infer from that the existence of a Maker. Conversely, Adam's and Eve's wandering steps include wonderment for Adam and Eve are moving into a world of which they have no experience, and through which they are guided by the wonder of God's Providence.

Most importantly, and most miraculously of all, their wandering steps, for all that they do wander, do not wander from the way but are contained within its bounds. Perfection is impossible for fallen man while he wanders this earth, but

a way to Salvation is not. Milton does not bring us to the end of this way, for that, he believed, was something each individual, with God's Grace, could only do for himself. But he does reveal the way to our sight. It is this, perhaps, which is his greatest justification.

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